THE TREATMENT OF THE NEGRO
IN THE FICTION OF NORTH CAROLINA
1920-1940

A THESIS

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PREFACE

During the last two decades, the South has been the battleground for the conflicting opinions attendant upon her cultural awakening. These diverging beliefs, revealing themselves in attitudes toward her traditional patterns, have found expression in her fiction which has increased phenomenally in recent years. These beliefs have affected in several instances the treatment of this fiction dealing with various phases of Southern life. It is the possibility of a new imaginative approach, born of these attitudes, toward the Negro, who has been a stock figure in Southern literature, that has been the subject of this thesis, which is but a division of a larger study now in progress, at Atlanta University. This study is to determine what change the last twenty years have wrought in the treatment accorded the Negro in fiction by Southern whites.

The Negro in American literature has already been the subject of much valuable research. There has preceded this examination innumerable articles including W. S. Braithwaite's "The Negro in American Literature" (1925), H. P. Marley's "The Negro in Southern Literature" (1928), and Benjamin Brawley's "The Negro in Contemporary Literature" (1929), and such studies as Francis Pendleton Gaines' The Southern Plantation (1925), John Herbert Nelson's The Negro Character in American Literature (1926), Elizabeth Lay Green's The Negro in Contemporary American Literature (1928), Nick Aaron Ford's The Contemporary Negro Novel (1936), Sterling Brown's The Negro in American Fiction (1937), and Willie Lou Talbot's Master's thesis, "The Development of the Negro Character in the Southern Novel, 1824-1900" (1938).

None of these, however, has limited itself to the province of the present thesis in which the treatment of the Negro is devoted to the

fiction of a single state, published between 1920-1940. An attempt has been made to examine all available novels and a few selected short stories written by North Carolina writers within the prescribed period.

The main bases used in identifying an author with a state are birth or present residence within the state. If, however, an author is claimed by more than one state, as in the case of Howard Odum, born in Georgia, birth takes precedent.

The writer wishes to acknowledge indebtedness to the Atlanta University Library for aid in procuring fictional materials, to the University of North Carolina and Duke University libraries for assistance in the compilation of a useful bibliography.

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CHAPTER I

CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

The Southern United States, comprising fourteen commonwealths, of which North Carolina is one, is traditionally known, more than any other section of the country, to look with disfavor and distrust on any evidence of change in their cultural pattern.[1] This tradition is based on a truth, for the South has looked back on her past with veneration, obscuring the defects so that they no longer remained visible; and dazzled by the picture conjured up by her exalted reverence, has become blinded to future progress and impervious to any change in the worship of her past glory.

This prevailing mental attitude in the South has been as much a defense mechanism as anything else. Since the beginning of the American reaction against slavery, and continuing even to the present, she has been so "criticized, patronized, and caricatured"[2] by those not of the South, that she has felt she must be, in defense of her pride and self-respect, more than averagely proud of her possessions and her heritage. The fact that her material developments for some decades past have been fewer than those of other sections of the nation has only made her value her heritage the more, and she looks upon her glorified past with greater longing and reverence. Defeated and thwarted, yet unconquered in spirit, and "inheriting the provincialism and sensitiveness of a feudal order", the South has remained in a kind of proud isolation, convinced that some day, even though

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[1] Josephine Pickney, "Bulwark Against Change," Culture in the South, ed. W. T. Couch (Chapel Hill, 1935), p. 40.

[2] Howard W. Odum, Southern Regions of the United States (Chapel Hill, 1935), p. 555.

it be in the far dim future, she would some day triumph in the principles for which her fathers stood and died.[1] Until that day, she has been content to bask in the reflected glory of a past shrouded in myths that have become so real that she can no longer distinguish between the fact and fancy which are woven into the idealized picture of her former self.

Not all the people of the South, however, have been willing to remain worshippers of a departed day. Since the period of Reconstruction there have always been a few who have urged the South to throw off the schackles of her decadent past and become in reality what she is often called--the New South. The few herald a renaissance, both economic and literary, which is now taking place. "If we turn to the South of today, we are confronted with unmistakable signs of a spiritual awaking which gives promise of some sort of literary and cultural renascence."[2]

Unable to resist the national trends set in motion after the first World War, the South has begun to loosen herself from the past and to prove that under her mask of complacency, life still surged vibrantly, and, following progressive trends, she has taken new interest in her affairs and begun to live in the present and to look toward the future.

Her newspapers serve as an index to her culture and reflect[3] the new movements which are changing her society. Still burdened by the taboos of Southern society, there are many[4] which do not, as yet, show a resurgence

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[1] Edwin Mims, The Advancing South (New York, 1927), p. 3.

[2] Archibald Henderson, "Democracy and Literature," South Atlantic Quarterly, XII (April, 1913), p. 105.

[3] John D. Allen, "Journalism in the South," Culture in the South, ed. W. T. Couch, p. 127.

[4] Among these liberal papers are many of those of North Carolina: The Greensboro News, The Raleigh News and Observer, and The Asheville Citizen.

of new thought. However, as a whole, they are losing the bias which has been theirs, and, though they cannot dynamically influence society, are intensifying those movements already begun.[1]

In her periodicals, most of which have been established during this century,[2] the new cultural trends are again made manifest. Publications such as the Southwest Review, Virginia Quarterly Review, Sewanee Review, and The North Georgia Review,[3] have attempted to keep free of narrow sectionalism and to encourage all efforts which might lead to a better South. Succeeding better than any, probably, is Social Forces, published at the University of North Carolina.

No interpretation of these current tendencies, however, can be adequate without, at least, some consideration of the past. Before the period during which the reactionary forces against slavery grew strong enough to cause her uneasiness, the South felt certain that her society, feudalistic in nature, was secure. Her climate suited to large scale cotton production, she based her economy increasingly on this staple, more and more land being cleared, and a greater number of slaves being bought to cultivate the growing acreage planted. Always the planter had hopes of growing rich quickly by producing huge quantities of the crop and selling it at the high prices obtainable.[4]

This economic system, basically unsound, was attacked by the North. The South, thrown upon the defensive, began to defend her system of

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[1] John D. Allen, "Journalism in the South," Culture in the South, ed. W. T. Couch, p. 127.

[2] Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South (Chapel Hill, 1932), p. 393.

[3] Of these mentioned, The North Georgia Review, the youngest, is the only one not a University publication.

[4] Charles W. Ramsdell, "The Southern Heritage," Culture in the South, ed. W. T. Couch, p. 7.

slavery and all that was Southern. Each fresh attack made by the North served only to induce an extreme sensitiveness and to deepen the patterns of defense.[1] The antagonism between the two sections, augmented by political antipathies as well as those economic, led to the Civil War, the end of which saw the South's economic and social system overturned, her material possessions destroyed, and her land laid waste.[2] It did not destroy her defense patterns, however, for they grew deeper, and she immediately sought to re-create, as far as possible, the ante-bellum scene. The slaves were free, of course, but looked on as an "inferior and servile race" they could again "be made the basis of wealth and leisure for the white South. Agriculture must remain supreme, for only on an agrarian economy could the civilization of the Old South be restored."[3]

But the old regime could not again be revived; nothing was exactly the same. The Negroes, still virtually slaves, were an ever increasing social, economic, and political problem; and her fear of Negro domination and extreme poverty grew. With the realization that she no longer held a place in the current affairs of the Union came a longing for the past when she was a part of the national picture. So she began to idealize the Old South, and as its memories receded, they became tinged "with a roseate glow", she saw herself a place "composed principally of the fine old aristocracy whose homes were ever filled with light and laughter and whose prosperous fields were tilled only by happy, loyal and contented slaves."[4]

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[1] Charles W. Ramsdell, "The Southern Heritage," Culture in the South, ed. W. T. Couch, p. 7.

[2] Ibid., p. 9.

[3] Benjamin Burks Kendricks and Alex Matthews Arnett, The South Looks at Its Past (Chapel Hill, 1935), pp. 105-106.

[4] Charles W. Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 15.

This is the South which the forces of liberalism had to combat, a South haunted by the ghosts of "the Confederacy, the fear of Negro domination and religious orthodoxy."[1] This is the foundation on which the new culture, struggling for existence, had to be built.

Much has been written about the South in recent years, by those both of, and not of, the South. Those outside have often been ruthless in their criticism of her traditions; they have exploded her myths in innumerable books and articles,[2] showing her to be a helpless, backward people. One is left "overwhelmed by the representation of social, economic, and cultural conditions"[3] as they have been unfavorably shown to exist. Not all the non-Southern critics, however, see the South as quite so hopeless. These predict that some day when a higher civilization reaches her, her unlimited resources will be developed.

The appraisals which the South makes of itself are divided into two groups. There are those who continue to defend all that is Southern and maintain that all the South's possessions, material and spiritual, are far better than those of any other section of the country. Then there are others who look on the South realistically. Said to be lacking in patriotism and the fine sensibilities of gentlefolk by the South's glorifiers, they struggle valiantly against the ghosts of the past.[4]

The first group have surrounded the ideals of the South and its people with a romantic glow,[5] and attack all who dare to disagree or who

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[1] Edwin Mims, The Advancing South, p. 31.

[2] Among these, Scraggs, Southern Oligarchy; These United States; Tannenbaum, Darker Phases of the South; and Mencken, "Sahara of the Bozart."

[3] Edwin Mims, op. cit., p. 10.

[4] Howard W. Odum, An American Epoch (New York, 1930), p. 105.

[5] Ibid.

might turn to a frank facing of the facts as they are. Always they speak of the South in superlatives;[1] they recall memories of the past and draw pictures of the injustices done her, and the losses she has sustained.

> 'You have heard of the Old South...its traditions...memories... the expansive plantations...forty-four percent of the entire Nation's wealth...in Southern hands...in four tragic years all this swept away, destroyed, stolen....Priceless traditions of gallentry that had sustained an ill-prepared, ill-equipped, ill-fed army for four years against a force tremendously greater.... That which was of the Old South was gone....[But] the soul of its charm and aristocracy and breeding, the memories of its power lived on. For those were the things not even war and the horrors of war's aftermath, could destroy.'[2]

Dreaming dreams of a future South built on the past the glorifiers continue,

> 'But we have not lost the blood royal of the ancient line; and in the veins of an ancient Southland still ripples the heroic strain. The Confederate woman, in her silent influence, in her eternal vigil, still abides. Her gentle spirit is the priceless heritage of her daughters. The Old queen passes, but the young queen lives; and radiant like the morning on her brow, is Dixie's diadem.'[3]

Of such was their kingdom, a kingdom whose sentiments were found to be very much alive at the beginning of the second quarter of the present century.[4]

Very different are the opinions of the second group, now a rapidly growing minority. Insisting on facing the facts, they make a realistic approach to the problem.[5] They are restless under the bans of the traditions of Southern society, and like those critics outside the region, they have studied her present life and found it disappointing.

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[1] Howard W. Odum, An American Epoch (New York, [1930]), p. 110.
[2] Ibid., pp. 108-109.
[3] Ibid., p. 105.
[4] Ibid., p. 108.
[5] Ibid., p. 111.

> A section that is still solid in politics, however issues or candidates may change, that is a fertile ground for all sorts of intolerant ideas, that still gives little evidence that in-institutions of higher learning, fostered by state and private benevolence, have any appreciable influence on public opinion--surely such a section must seem a disappointment to the country as a whole.[1]

One of these critics sees the South "capable of producing a superior civilization, yet so conditioned by complexity of culture and cumulative handicaps as to make the nature of future development problematical."[2] She has been so busy "yearning for the symbol of the old plantation, fearing the Negro, and held in thrall by credit institutions"[3] that she has had no time to plan for future progress; and long standing in the "shadow of laissez-faire" as regards land tenure, there seems almost no hope of her developing a free holding yeomanry, the backbone of a people.[4]

These critics are studying every phase of Southern life, politics, society, literature, and religion, highly orthodox in its fundamentalism. Among those who have studied her in the hope that their findings might cause improvements are Howard Odum, W. T. Couch, and Gerald Johnson. Such attempts at an objective study of the South's problems as these men make are definite manifestations of a growing liberalism.

Further evidence of liberalism is the quickened interest in affairs not entirely Southern. Beginning to feel herself a part of the Nation, the South has become interested in both national and international affairs, for she is at last becoming aware that if she wishes to progress she cannot live isolated and untouched by present-day trends.

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[1] Edwin Mims, The Advancing South, p. 9.

[2] Howard W. Odum, Southern Regions, p. 217.

[3] Ibid., p. 493.

[4] Ibid.

The liberal movement is seen again in the efforts being made to solve the South's major problem, the race problem. Through interracial conferences, race relations boards, and other such means, it is hoped that some adjustment, agreeable to both races, will be eventually effected. The liberals have dismissed the pseudo-liberalism expressed by a large number of Southerners[1] who, while saying that they are willing to give the Negro the rights which are his constitutionally, deliberately take from him his political and civil rights.

Another aspect of the renaissance is the new interest being shown in literature. Slow to follow the lead of the nation in this field as in others, the South, after the first World War, felt the same revivifying influence which, since the beginning of the present century, has permeated American letters.

> At the opening of the century's third decade when Southern letters were at a low ebb, the South felt the revivifying force of the liberal movement which followed the World War. Its effects were reflected in the literature of both America and England, and even in that of Russia. It was impossible, therefore, for the South to remain untouched, and one may assume that the literary burgeoning which occurred below the Potomac in the post-war era is attributable in large measure to the powerful currents which were then sweeping the world.[2]

Realism, the most important literary movement during the present

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[1] One of these, Robert W. Winston, Current History, XII (July, 1925), p. 545, after expressing a wish to help the Negro says, "Once the ambitious Negro comes to understand that in the South the present social, political, and civil status of the Negro is the high-water mark of his advancement, he will no longer demand an impossible equality or think the thoughts of Mr. White in the Fire and the Flint." He says, further, that if all attempts at an adjustment are unsuccessful, a home must be found for the Negro outside the United States. See Robert W. Winston, "Rebirth of the Southern States," Current History, XII (July, 1925), p. 545.

[2] Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 385.

century, has been seen in various manifestations during the past two decades. The Southern writer, for the ten years past, has been aware of its possibilities and, following the lead of those like Sinclair Lewis, use it as an instrument of satire and social protest.[1]

Critics take the beginning of the post-war period, 1919-1920, as the birth of modern Southern letters.[2] Since that date innumerable volumes dealing with "Negro, Negro white conflict, mountain people, town life, industrial scenes--the people and their life, southern aristocracy, the southern common man"[3] have been written.

These critics for the most part have been enthusiastic in the heralding of a new era. Donald Davidson says,

> Certainly no description of difficulties that beset the Southern writer can obscure the fact that the South, after more than a decade of exciting literary activity, is well launched upon a productive period which may excell anything it has previously achieved in letters.[4]

In the foreword to the first number of The Fugitive the birth of a new South and a new literature are proclaimed:

> "The Old South of abstraction is dying dead and in its place I profess to see emerging in literature a new South whose possibilities such as to startle even the American Mercury."[5]

And Edwin Mims says,

> ...more men and women are writing fiction, poetry, plays and literary criticism than at any time in the past quarter century, and...displaying a critical intelligence, a sense of literary

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[1] Harlan Hatcher, Creating the Modern American Novel (New York, [1935]), p. 72.

[2] Ibid., p. 73.

[3] Howard Odum, Southern Regions, p. 529.

[4] Donald Davidson, "The Trend in Literature," Culture in the South, ed. W. T. Couch, p. 199.

[5] Paul Green in the Reviewer (January, 1925). Quoted from Jay B. Hubbell, "Southern Magazines", Culture in the South, p. 178.

> values, and a reaction against sentimentalism and romance which have not been hitherto regarded as characteristic of Southern writing.[1]

Much has been said of the quality of the literature; characteristic statements are these made by Odum:

> ...in all this new literature there was a vitality and promise; an ever increasing evidence of regional maturity protesting against the older decadence and the current immaturity.[2]

and

> While something of old romanticism was revived, the mode [of Southern novels recently] was predominately that of a realistic and critical review of southern people.[3]

Though the majority of observers are agreed there has been a new birth in Southern literature, there still remain those who are skeptical. These latter remember the past announcements of such a revival as far back as 1885, when the Atlantic Monthly proclaimed that there was at that time the rise of a new school of literature different from "the florid, coarse-flavored literature" which continued to flourish in the South.[4] And in 1907, Edwin A. Alderman declared in the preface to The Library of Southern Literature that a new literature marked by a new energy was being born. Such unfilled prophecies have occurred so often that the skeptical are hesitant to acknowledge a new literature.[5] Now, however, there seems little chance for the prophecies to go unfilled. And even though at present much of the literature cannot well be measured by the artistic

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[1] Edwin Mims, The Advancing South, pp. 198-99.

[2] Howard W. Odum, Southern Regions, p. 531.

[3] Ibid., p. 529.

[4] Donald Davidson, "The Trend of Literature", Culture in the South, p. 185.

[5] Ibid.

yard-stick, it is alive where that of yesterday was dead. Gerald Johnson says of it:

> If a good deal of the South's recent literature stinks--and in my opinion it does--it is with the odors of the barnyard, not those of the charnel-house. The pretty literature of thirty years ago had a different smell, it reeked of tuberoses, funeral flowers. An undertaker's parlor, banked with floral designs, smells sweeter than a compost-heap; but death is in the midst of one, and the promise of a golden harvest in the other.[1]

A comparison of the new literature with that of the past would show the new to stand in the same relation to the old as the New South does to the Old South; it would show a decided shift in standards. This change in literary standards becomes most apparent in a contrast of "the school that flourished a generation ago" with the school to which T. S. Stribling, Ellen Glasgow, and Erskine Caldwell belong.[2]

The literature of the Old South, generally very romantic and sentimental, was written in the aristocratic tradition begun before the Civil War. Few authors dared to depart from the hackneyed picture of the Colonel, the julep, the contented slave,[3] and such variations which showed the Negro infinitely better off in a condition of servitude.

Very few books of any real literary value were written during the ante-bellum period; two exceptions were Longstreet's Georgia Scenes (1840), dismissed in its time in much the same way as Erskine Caldwell's books are today as "brutally exaggerated bits of realism;"[4] and William Gilmore Sims' The Cabin and the Wigwam (1844) which tried to portray the plantation as

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[1] Gerald Johnson, "The Horrible South," Virginia Quarterly Review, XI (April, 1935), p. 217.

[2] Edwin Mims, The Advancing South, p. 202.

[3] Ellen Glasgow, "The Novel in the South," Harper's Monthly, CLVIII (December, 1938), 95.

[4] Hamilton Basso, "Letters in the South," New Republic, LXXXIII (January 9, 1935), 162.

it was and not as an idealized picture.[1]

The tradition "came to its period of greatest flowering during the years immediately following the Civil War,"[2] when the South, inflicted with a bitter nostalgia, began to live and yearn for a return of the past. Such novelists as Thomas Nelson Page, Charles Egbert Craddock, and James Lane Allen kept alive the tradition in literature.[3] George Washington Cable, the first writer "to question the validity of the tradition and the growing assumption that the present was not unlike the past,"[4] was one of the few who dared to ignore the code of Southern society; and he was held up to "more than one aspiring" writer as a horrible example of the "retribution of an outraged people." He had broken the "code of manners" and was "hanged in chains" that others might profit.[5]

The tradition in slight variation appeared in volume after volume published in the half-century after the Civil War. At the opening of the twentieth century, despite the "excursion into realism on the part of George W. Cable and Joel Chandler Harris," Southern fiction was, for the most part, "mellow and moon drenched,"[6] and when "not compounded of handsome colonels and their raven-haired ladies, of shuffling 'darkies' and despised 'poor white trash,'"[7] as are found in Thomas Nelson Page's romantic "delicately

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[1] DuBose Heyward, "The New Note in Southern Literature," The Bookman, LXI (April, 1925), 153.

[2] Hamilton Basso, "Letters in the South," New Republic, p. 161.

[3] Edwin Mims, The Advancing South, p. 202.

[4] Hamilton Basso, "Letters in the South," op. cit., p. 162.

[5] DuBose Heyward, "The New Note in Southern Literature," op. cit., p. 153.

[6] Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 381.

[7] Ibid.

wrought novels," it was very partisan toward the North. Of this latter type Thomas Dixon's sensational novels,[1] conceived in a spirit of venom and prejudice against the Negro, are an example.[2]

So many novels of these types appeared during the two decades of the new century that the inevitable reaction against outworn types, manners, scenes, and the "plantation cult" generally, set in;[3] and a period of comparative literary barrenness, broken chiefly by the works of Ellen Glasgow, followed in its wake. Nor was this period of reaction dispelled until the new currents of thought during the post-war period began to affect the South.

The new output, far from being satisfactory in a literary sense, has been, nevertheless, an advancement over the old. It was alive. Gerald Johnson in an essay on the South and its literature says,

> The horrible South was the South that was morally, spiritually, and intellectually dead. The South that fatuously regarded every form of art, literature included, as a pretty toy, but in no sense one of the driving forces of civilization--that was the horrible South....The South whose young women were silent except for giggles, and whose young men were silent except for brays--that was the horrible South.
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> But a South full of bitter muscular men [the new Southern novelists] with swords--that may be alarming but it isn't horrible. A young man who raves and curses with the voice of Stentor and the venom of Jeremiah, may be described by any number of adjectives, but no rational man will intimate that he is dead...[4]

One of the fields in which the new spirit has been most apparent is in the South's new literary treatment of the Negro.[5] Whereas in earlier fiction

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[1] These were revered by those who declared the Negro had been better off physically and morally under the institution of slavery.

[2] Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 381.

[3] Edwin Mims, The Advancing South, p. 202.

[4] Gerald Johnson, "The Horrible South," op. cit., pp. 216-217.

[5] Virginius Dabney, op. cit., p. 388.

he was customarily given a subordinate and secondary place, and made to bathe in the reflected glory of his 'white folks',[1] today a new approach is being made, an approach that can best be understood by a brief consideration of the old.[2]

From the publication of The Valley of Shenandoah (1824) to the present, the Negro character in Southern fiction has passed through several stages of development.[3] At first, considered too ignoble to merit a place of any importance in literature, he was rarely used except as a very minor part of the scene.[4] With the publication of Kennedy's Swallow Barn (1832), however, the foundation of the role of the ideal slave,[5] later to be used increasingly, was laid. The plantation tradition had begun.

During the Civil War period the traditional role of the loyal, happy, jovial, careless, carefree, lazy, undependable, superstitious 'darky', whom heaven had ordained for slavery, was further developed into the Southern propaganda novel. This conventional role of the Negro in fiction crystallized after the war and was seldom departed from; the few departures, such as Cable's, made little or no difference in the conception. Rarely ever used as a main character, he was an important minor one in any picture of Southern life; "the colored maid, the droll gardener, or the pompous and dictatorial black cook," with often the Negro minister included to "furnish comic relief";"[6] were the common property of Southern fiction. It was the

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[1]Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 388.

[2]Harold P. Marley, "The Negro in Recent Southern Literature," South Atlantic Quarterly, XXVII (January, 1928), 29.

[3]Willie Lou Talbot, "The Development of the Negro Character in the Southern Novel, 1824-1900." Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of English, Louisiana State University, 1938, p. 8.

[4]Francis Pendleton Gaines, The Southern Plantation (New York, 1925), p. 15.

[5]John Herbert Nelson, The Negro Character in American Literature (Lawrence, Kansas, 1926), p. 128.

[6]Elizabeth Lay Green, The Negro in Contemporary American Literature (Chapel Hill, 1928), p. 38.

romanticizing of the "old-timey" Negro established by Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris[1] and carried on by later writers. Departures from this stock figure came only after the first World War.

The new school of writers discovered the Negro as unworked material, bountiful in possibilities, and began to delineate him for artistic purposes. For the first time he became the main character, and, for the first time, was treated essentially for his literary possibilities. Such novelists as W. A. Shands, Julia Peterkin, DuBose Heyward, T. S. Stribling, Roark Bradford, and Paul Green, "embued with the realistic spirit"[2] and searching for the exotic and picturesque, found the Negro to be an ideal medium.

Some of these treatments of the Negro have been honest and sympathetic, the author endeavoring to look at life through the Negro's eyes and give a true picture of both his inward and outward life.[3] Many of these fictional representations have been clever, "more have been dishonest, tedious, and unpleasant."[4] Often there is an undue emphasis, possibly a result of the realistic school, on futility and fatalism. It is significant, also, that the industrious, self-respecting Negro who has successfully "battled life" is seldom mentioned,[5] and that there are "constantly recurrent" the beliefs that the educated Negro has been a failure and that the "integrity of the womanhood of the race is open to question."[6]

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[1]Elizabeth Lay Green, The Negro in Contemporary American Literature, p. 16.

[2]Harlan Hatcher, Creating the Modern American Novel, p. 141.

[3]Harold P. Marley, "The Negro in Recent Southern Literature," South Atlantic Quarterly, XXVII (January, 1928), 29.

[4]Benjamin Brawley, "The Negro in Contemporary Literature," English Journal, XVIII (March, 1929), 196.

[5]Ibid., p. 202.

[6]Ibid.

However much the new literature falls short of perfection, it is an advancement over the old. The Negro has, at last, been "discovered" in literature, and aided by the increasing portrayals by Negro authors, and the cultural renaissance, the Southern white author sees that he has barely begun with the Negro, a field rich and waiting for the artist's hand to interpret.[1]

Probably none of the fourteen states comprising the South has been the testing ground for the new movements as North Carolina. Ranking third when measured by the indices selected to represent all aspects of culture, from land use and values to educational institutions,[2] North Carolina, known as the Old North State and the Tarheel State,[3] has been the most publicized state of a publicized South; innumerable pamphlets have been written setting forth her merits.[4] Individualistic, she no longer stands in unfavorable contrast to her neighbors, South Carolina and Virginia, is no longer in the "valley of humility between two mountains of conceit."[5]

The state is divided into distinct sections geographically; the coastal plain, which is the rich section of the large plantation owners; the Piney Woods; the Piedmont, a hilly section of small farms owned by people of Scotch-Irish ancestry; and the mountainous section, still more or less primitive.[6] Settled by the Scotch-Irish, English, French, and Dutch, the

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[1] "Writers Wanted," Saturday Review of Literature (April 18, 1936), p. 8.

[2] Howard W. Odum, Southern Regions, p. 565.

[3] Ibid., p. 538.

[4] Ibid., p. 559.

[5] Ibid., p. 543.

[6] Holland Thompson, From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill (New York, 1906), pp. 23-24.

State has been influenced by a mixture of cultures, with the Scotch-Irish predominating. From the very beginning she has been a state of small farms worked by a sturdy middle class, for the Colonial authorities, unlike those of South Carolina and Virginia, granted only small tracts of land to settlers, and for this reason she has had few large plantations.

The outcome of the Civil War developed in North Carolina,

> ...as in other states of the Confederacy, an intense hypersensitiveness, an unadmitted consciousness of inferiority, an attitude which expressed itself in scorn of the victors and blind defense of everything southern and especially North Carolina.[1]

But recent years have seen her transformed from one of the inferior, "poorest and most dejected states in the Union to a rich and lusty commonwealth,"[2] a transformation caused by an educational and industrial process begun more than a quarter century ago.

Because of her recent rapid industrialization, North Carolina has developed a dual economic culture, agrarian-industrial. Statistical records show that there has been a phenomenal increase in textile, furniture, and tobacco manufacture, and she is generally thought of as an industrial state.[3] However, she is still predominately rural in the sense that her "people, [her] income [and her] institutions are still predominately agrarian."[4] She has been faced with the tremendous problem of adjusting her agricultural philosophy to her industrial conditions, for however agrarian she remains, industrialization has influenced her culture--religion, politics, social customs, etc. This adjustment has been more rapid, though still disappoin-

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[1] Nell B. Lewis, "North Carolina," American Mercury, VIII (May 8, 1926), 36.

[2] Ibid., p. 30.

[3] Howard W. Odum, Southern Regions, p. 563.

[4] Ibid., p. 30.

ting in many of its phases, during the last twenty years. This has been due partly to the University of North Carolina whose department of Rural Social-Economics[1] has studied the economic and social conditions of the State. Their findings have led, through legislation and other means, to the eradication of many undesirable conditions.[2]

Almost all of the remarkable advances, evidences of a cultural awakening in North Carolina, are attributable to the University of North Carolina, "the most aggressively liberal of all the Southern institutions of higher learning,"[3] and its "forward looking scholars," among whom are Howard W. Odum in sociology, Paul Green in literature and literary criticism, and W. T. Couch, director of the University Press. The University has made such rapid progress in recent years "that...[an] eminent English educator [has]... said that it is regarded in Great Britain as one of the half dozen greatest universities in America."[4]

One of the most extraordinary things about the University has been "the productivity of the university's teaching staff in the field of the social sciences and the humanities,"[5] undoubtably due in part to the establishment of the University Press and such nationally known journals as Social Forces and Studies in Philology.[6] Under the direction of Howard

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[1]Samuel Huntington Hobbs, Jr., North Carolina, Economic and Social (Chapel Hill, 1930), p. 10. Speaking further of the work of the department he says that "Nowhere in America is there such a vast collection of social-economic information about a single state" as there is in the department's library at the University.

[2]Ibid., p. ix.

[3]Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 350.

[4]Ibid., pp. 345-46.

[5]Ibid., p. 350.

[6]Ibid.

Odum and W. T. Couch, studies of the South have been and are being done. Among the better known of those completed are Southern Regions of the United States by Odum and Culture in the South, edited by Couch.

Another field in which the University has made remarkable progress is that of drama. The University dramatic group, The Carolina Playmakers, under the direction of Frederick Koch, has endeavored to make the state conscious of its rich heritage in legends and historical life. The group, by using plays which deal only with the State, hope to show the necessity of her using her people, the mountain white, and the Negro, the rich man and the industrial worker, as artistic material. Highly successful in its efforts to develop talent, it has produced such well known writers as Thomas Wolfe and Paul Green.[1]

The influence of the University on both North Carolina and the South has been tremendous; so great has it been that the State is looked on as the cultural leader of the South, the role once held by Virginia, later by South Carolina, and after the Civil War, by Georgia, who, on becoming the home of the Ku Klux Klan, lost the sceptre to North Carolina.[2]

The work of the University in its fight for liberalism must not be overlooked; in its efforts in this direction it has fought intolerance and race prejudice and looked toward a betterment of racial relationship. Its nationally recognized "Institute for Research in Social Science directed by Howard W. Odum since 1922, has devoted a large share of its attention to matters pertaining to the Negro."[3] Quadrennially the University's student

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[1] Frederick H. Koch, "Folk Play Making," Carolina Folk Plays, ed. Frederick H. Koch, I, ix.

[2] Edwin Mims, The Advancing South, p. 9.

[3] Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 262.

body holds an Institute on Human Relations, at which industrial and interracial and other questions of the day are discussed.[1] Social Forces has, from its beginning, featured articles by Negroes; the department of sociology offers courses on the Negro and the race problem; the University has published several studies on the Negro, and the student body has heard several Negro lecturers. Duke University, less well known academically than the State University, follows closely in the path of the older institution in the fight for liberalism.

The desire for fairness to the Negro, while seemingly widespread in the State, does not mean that the race problem does not loom large in North Carolina. Although Negro life is considered better in North Carolina than in Georgia, Mississippi,[2] and a number of other Southern states, the problem is, nevertheless, a relatively acute one, for many agree with the recent statement made by a North Carolinian: "'I don't know but what those Georgians and Mississippians have the right way [lynching, mob action] to treat a Nigger'."[3] However, the fact that many are trying to meet the situation fairly, as is evident by the interest taken in the sociological studies being made at the University, is proof that the new liberalism is triumphing.

However foremost North Carolina has been in other fields, she has not been prominent among her sister states in literature;[4] she has made no lasting contribution to Southern art. Her heroes have been her politicians, bankers, good road experts, and textile manufacturers; she has been content

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[1] Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 349.

[2] Nell B. Lewis, "North Carolina," American Mercury, VIII (May 8, 1926), 43.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Paul Green, "The Playmakers and Our Art," Carolina Playmakers, ed. Frederick H. Koch, III, xxix.

to startle the outsider with her industrial advancement.[1] The author has had little place in her past or even now in her present; her interest has been elsewhere, centering mainly on materialistic gains.

Among her earliest ante-bellum fiction writers was Mrs. Joseph Gales who wrote Matilda Berkley (1804). Other works which followed were Blackbeard (1824), a comedy, by Lemuel Sawyer; Eoneguski (1839), a story of Cherokee Indian life so critical of the white man's treatment of the Indian that it was supressed; Alamance (1847) and Roanoke (1849) by Calvin H. Wiley.[2] Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz, a Northerner by birth, married to a Southerner who for a while taught at the University of North Carolina, wrote a number of blood and tear romances set in North Carolina, among them, The Planter's Northern Bride (1854), in which a Northern girl, married to a Southerner, is converted to the idea of slavery.[3]

Following the Civil War, North Carolina's authors were few, Walter Hines Page, better known as a statesman than as an author of fiction, and Albion Tourgée, a Union officer who, after the war, remained in North Carolina for ten years, being the most outstanding. Both were radical in their day; both insisted on facing the South's problems; each saw that the South must help the Negro progress or she herself must remain backward. Charles Chesnutt, the first Negro novelist of any note, often identified with the State, in his novels, among them The Marrow of Tradition and The Colonel's Dream, was also realistic in his portrayal of Southern life.

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[1]Archibald Henderson, "Outline of the Literary Achievements of North Carolina with Their Prophecy," Christian Science Monitor (November 6, 1926), p. 17.

[2]Gion G. Johnson, Ante Bellum North Carolina (Chapel Hill, 1937), pp. 824-25.

[3]Sterling Brown, The Negro in American Fiction (Washington, 1937), pp. 93-94.

The turn of the century produced Thomas Dixon, a sensational politician, preacher, and lecturer before he became a novelist in 1902. With his works "sadly lacking in literary distinction and definitely pernicious as well;"[1] a distinct stage in the treatment of the Negro in fiction was reached. "The portraiture here descends from caricature to libel".[2] Dixon carried his sensationalism over into his novels and in The Leopard's Spots and The Clansman, both given a dubious sort of immortality[3] in their film version, The Birth of a Nation, breathed a hatred equal to if not worse than that of the most hate-filled novel.

In The Leopard's Spots (1902), set immediately after the Civil War, the freed Negro is shown as a degraded and debased animal who, if allowed, would "pollute the Anglo-Saxon race"[4] and drag it to the level of barbarism. The Negro who, like old Nelse, would reverence the white man and return to virtual slavery was the ideal Negro and the one the South would love and cherish.

The Clansman (1905) was conceived with a like venom and hatred. Dixon described minutely the wrong done by the ferocious, beast-like Negro during the Reconstruction rule of the freed slaves, and how the rule of the North, enforced by carpet-baggers and unscrupulous politicians bent on subduing the South and making the Negro supreme, was finally broken by the Ku Klux Klan, an organization to which the South's finest young men belonged.[5]

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[1] Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 310.

[2] William Stanley Braithwaite, "The Negro in American Literature," The New Negro, ed. Alain Locke (New York, 1925), p. 33.

[3] Sterling Brown, The Negro in American Fiction, pp. 93-4.

[4] Thomas Dixon, The Leopard's Spots (New York, 1902), p. 150.

[5] Thomas Dixon, The Clansman (New York, 1905).

The present literary endeavors of the State show some improvement over those of the past. The main emphasis, however, has not been on fiction, but on sociological studies, a great number of which have been published at the University recently. Recently, too, there has been an interest shown in the type of literature in which the people speak for themselves, an example of which is These Our Lives, published last year by the University Press. The technique used in the book lies between the fictional and the sociological, the book itself following somewhat in the path of You Have Seen Their Faces by Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White. It consists of the experiences told the investigators by the people themselves.

The fiction, reflecting the interests of the people of the State, uses as its main themes the mountain whites, the Negro, industrialism, tenancy and certain historical aspects of the State. The Negro as yet plays a minor role, as he always has, except in the novels of Dixon, in the fiction of the State. Unlike the authors of South Carolina, Louisiana, Georgia, and Mississippi, few of the North Carolinians use the Negro as main characters in their works, as the following examination of the recent literature will show.

The findings of the study of this recent literature will be presented in the following pages. To simplify the presentation of the material, the books have been divided into two main groups: The books which show little or no change in the portrayal of the Negro character, and those which show new trends in the treatment of the character. Necessarily there will be some overlapping, for even those who tend toward a new treatment of the Negro show traces of the old, and those which follow the old paths often give promise of a new approach. But some classification being necessary, the writer has felt that this best fitted the material to be presented.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTINUANCE OF THE TRADITION

> Bright clouds floated lazily in the azure sky. A Negro was plowing a mule in the nearest field of cotton. Cows grazed in the pasture below the house. The world was hushed in an unearthly stillness.[1]

This quotation expresses generally the place accorded the Negro character, to be discussed here, in the recent fiction by the writers of North Carolina inheriting the plantation tradition sustained in Southern fiction. Despite the fact that the present century has brought with it a decline in the tradition, it has persisted in various derivations throughout the literature of the South.[2] Although the plantation setting has more or less vanished, the traditional Negro character has survived with varying modifications as a part of the Southern scene.

This tradition, inherited by the present North Carolina writer, has not been so much a legacy bestowed upon the authors of the State, since North Carolina has had few writers of plantation literature,[3] but as one bequeathed to all Southern authors, who have established the stereotyped Negro character, with all of his happy-go-lucky traits.

Presenting a childlike people infinitely better off under the benevolent guardianship of slavery,[4] the tradition began to take form with the publication of John Pendleton Kennedy's Swallow Barn (1832).[5] At first,

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[1] Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword (Atlanta, 1939), p. 10.

[2] Francis Pendleton Gaines, The Southern Plantation, p. 89.

[3] Ibid., p. 90.

[4] Sterling Brown, The Negro in American Fiction, p. 18.

[5] Francis Pendleton Gaines, op. cit., p. 22.

the Negro character had very few defined characteristics. However, in the hands of later novelists as William Gilmore Sims (1806-1870) and Thomas Nelson Page (1853-1922) the Negro became a stock figure, very religious, highly superstitious, loyal and happy-natured to the point of childishness, unmoral, unintelligent, and comical. Accepted as an inferior being, he was believed to be in need of few material comforts and blessings of life, such as decent living quarters, and clothes, since he possessed a rich laughter and a rich music, the sufficient means to keep happy.

The characteristics attributed to the Negro by the past generation of writers had, no doubt, "some basis in actuality,"[1] but as is so often the case, generalizations were drawn and a whole people were assigned a definite place and definite traits.[2]

The plantation glory departed and Southern writers, turning to a treatment of town and city life, no longer regarded it as their sole province for depiction. The Negro character, however, remained unchanged. He was given the same qualities wherever he was found. There was added to the traditional picture, in contrast to the "old time darky", the New Negro, brutish, ruined by education, and a menace to white civilization which seemed in danger of being swept away by a "rising tide of color."[3] "In proportion as Negroes showed themselves as seeking economic advancement and civil rights, authors portrayed them as insulting brutes and rapists."[4]

The tradition, heritage of all Southern writers, has been utilized

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[1] Sterling Brown, The Negro in American Fiction, p. 3.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 92.

[4] Ibid., p. 93.

in various ways by the present day author. Time and new trends have almost broken up the unit, but the Southern author has salvaged fragmentary pieces and used them repeatedly.[1] In many of the books with the plantation setting, the tradition continues without visible modification;[2] others treat it in the light of the realistic movement.

Much of the literature of North Carolina shows the effect of the tradition in the treatment of the Negro character. The plantation may be missing but the "social manifestations of the life that characterized the institution, particularly in its caste structure and race relation"[3] are present. Even in those books which make an altogether new approach to the Negro, the influence of the tradition is evident in however slight a degree.

These books which show traces of the tradition more directly may be divided into two groups: those whose use of the Negro follows the traditional pattern very closely, to which belong Thomas Dixon's most recent novel, The Flaming Sword; Gerald Johnson's biographical novel, By Reason of Strength; and the historical novels of James Boyd, Drums, Marching On, and Long Hunt, which give a "slight redirection to the tradition in the fashion of including larger epochs of time, wider sweeps of the old life, than had appeared in the typical stories of the preceding generation;"[4] and those which use the traditional character in a more modified form.

To this last group belong those books which use the Negro as the inevitable servant opening and closing doors, and doing household tasks,

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[1] Francis Pendleton Gaines, The Southern Plantation, p. 89.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 70.

[4] Ibid., p. 90.

and as the ever present menial in public places; and those which show his section of town as a part of the Southern picture, a dirty, unsanitary, unmoral section filled with a rich lush laughter seldom quiet and a music seldom stilled. Of these books Struthers Burt's The Delectable Mountain, Katherine Burt's The Tall Ladder and Beggars All, and Wilbur Daniel Steele's Isles of the Blest do little more than barely mention the Negro or show him as a very shadowy part of the background. In others also included in this group, such as Mary Bledsoe's Shadows Slant North, William Dudley Pelley's Golden Rubbish, and James Boyd's Roll River, he appears more often as the servant and man of all work. In the short stories and the novel of Paul Green and the novels of Thomas Wolfe a more detailed though still minor treatment is given.

In none of the books listed above does the portrayal of the Negro character, with the exception of that in the works of Paul Green and Thomas Wolfe, when he does appear, deviate much from the traditional conception. Paul Green and Thomas Wolfe, however, go slightly beyond the tradition and stand as a link between the old and the new attitude, and as such will be discussed. Reference also will be made to Paul Green's plays whose treatment of the Negro is similar to that found in his short stories.

Of all the books here mentioned, none follows quite so closely the traditional conception in its delineation of the Negro character as Thomas Dixon's The Flaming Sword. Written in the tradition of the Reconstruction novel whose purpose was to show the freed Negro as a menace to society, and following closely the outlines of his earlier novels, The Leopard's Spots and The Clansman, it portrays the loyal servant possessed of the accepted characteristics attributed to him by the tradition, and the New Negro as a menace to society. Depicting the Old South and slavery

as glories too soon passed away, this depiction comes to the inevitable conclusion that the Negro, unless suppressed would destroy American civilization.

In the foreword to the reader, Dixon says:

> I have tried in this story to give an authoritative record of the Conflict of Color in America from 1900 to 1938. To do this I have been compelled to use living men and women as important characters.[1]

The following blurb on the jacket of the book gives what purports to be the object of the story:

> Out of Six Years of silence in study and research Thomas Dixon writes again--a masterpiece.
>
> The Flaming Sword is more than a great novel of Love, Laughter, Tears, Thought and Fear. It is an epic of the nation. The statement in terms of final reality of the one unsolved problem of America which threatens our existence as a civilized people.
>
> The idea that we can solve this ugly problem by ignoring it is a favorite pose of pious morons, "liberals" and sentimentalists. The author tears the mask from these poseurs in a big hell-lit, dramatic story that cuts to the heart of our daily life.[2]

The traditional Negro possessed of all his assigned characteristics of loyalty toward the master is found in old Nelse,[3] former slave, who, when he heard that his one time master was about to lose his farm, took his small fortune, amassed since freedom, and

> ...came to his the master's rescue, paid the taxes and mortgage, discharged all the poor whites, reorganized the black share croppers under an efficient negro foreman and moved into his old room behind his master's.[4]

He continues the loyal servant, ever watchful of his master's well-

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[1] Thomas Dixon, "Foreword," The Flaming Sword.

[2] Ibid.

[3] There is also a loyal servant named Nelse in The Leopard's Spots. See Thomas Dixon, The Leopard's Spots (New York, 1902).

[4] Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword, p. 14.

being.

> "Don't try to hold me up, Nelse! I can walk as well as you", he growled.
>
> "No you can't, neither. You look out fur dat step gwine down ter de porch. Yur foot slip ef you doan mind."
>
> In spite of protests the gray haired Negro guided his master gently across the door sill and down the one step.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Nelse led Dr. Cameron to the arm chair in the center and took his seat in one provided for him a little behind and on the right.[1]

The picture of the loyal servant is completed when the master dies and the servant, out of grief, dies also.

> Angela and Marie had Nelse watch beside the casket in an arm chair. The Old Negro was utterly crushed. He made no response to the eloquent sermon the preacher delivered, just sat and stared at the casket. He took no notice of the condolences of his friends, black or white. The next morning he was found dead in his chair beside the fireplace. Dr. Cameron had asked that Nelse be buried in the family plot...And his wishes were carried out.[2]

Unchanged, too, from the traditional pattern is the picture drawn of slavery. Dr. Cameron speaks of the institution as being one of the most beautiful on earth. Quoting from the works of "a brilliant Southern woman" he sums up slavery:

> "'Little Negro and little white children grew up together, forming ties of affection equal to almost any strain. The servant was dependent on his master, the master on his servant. No class of labor on this earth was so well cared for as were the Negroes of the Old South. Age was pensioned, infirmity sheltered and manhood clothed and fed with the best the land afforded.'"[3]

However, it is not the past which is the background of the story, but the present projecting the New Negro. It is directed against every advancement made by the Negroes and intends to show them lacking in real progress, as a brutish weak people unfit and incapable of enjoying the right to life,

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[1] Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword, p. 16.

[2] Ibid., p. 151.

[3] Ibid., p. 25.

liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. A character declares--

> "The American ideal was never meant by its creators to include the Negro. A black slave handed to Thomas Jefferson the pen with which he wrote the Declaration of Independence. And when he wrote 'All men are created free and equal' he had no reference to the Negro. The conflict of color is a legacy of the Civil War."[1]

Aimed at showing the Negro as a growing menace to the white man and all he stands for, the book is little more than the author's own thoughts placed in the mouths of convenient characters conceived for this purpose only, who in speech after speech, publicly and privately, and throughout pages of the author's recorded thought, pile up what is supposed to be convincing proof of the Negro's lack of intelligence, his beast-like nature, and his general unfitness for American life. Captain Collier, after pages of what purports to be facts concerning the Negro's intelligence gives the following as undeniable proof of his contentions:

> "The Negroes from whom our slaves descended had lived on the continent of Africa, the richest, most wonderful division of land on earth, since the dawn of history, crunching acres of diamonds under his feet. Yet he never picked one up from the dust until a white man showed him its light."[2]

This passage typifies the kind of evidence used to support the thesis of the book, which is that the Negro is a menace of society.

Of like nature is the attack made on living members of the race "who would destroy"[3] the peaceful relationship existing between the two races.[4] Dr. Cameron, a "son of the old South", singles Dr. DuBois and his teachings out for special attack.

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[1] Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword, p. 25.

[2] Ibid., p. 42.

[3] Ibid., p. 18.

[4] Ibid.

> "Now comes a new leader who would destroy all this, and array race against race in another war of hate. I hold in my hand a little black book[1] by a Mulatto Professor in Atlanta University written with the deliberate purpose of stirring the worst passions--a fire-brand thrown into the imagination of the million Negroes. Let me quote you a few samples of its teachings.
>
> "'The dull red hideousness of Georgia.'
>
> "This man earns his bread as a teacher in Georgia and thus brands the State whose hospitality he enjoys. You may be sure no Negro born in Georgia ever penned such a sentence. That no Negro born a slave in that state could have penned it. No. Professor DuBois was born in Massachusetts. His people never knew slavery at first hand or second hand. All he knows of the history of our states and our people he drew from the imagination of Abolition fanatics who caused the Civil War. Again I read: 'Slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow!' This from a man who knew absolutely nothing about slavery except from sources of ignorance and prejudice."[2]

Dr. Cameron gives the following as proof of the falsity of what he calls the two principles on which Dr. DuBois' teachings rest:

> "He [DuBois] tells us that two million Mulattoes in the United States testify to the rape of two million helpless black women by white men."
>
> A loud laugh from his white audience drowned his voice.
>
> "It's no wonder that you laugh at the shameless lie. You know and I know, and every black and white man of the Old South knows that the rape of Negro women by white men is the dream of an Abolitionist fool. It didn't happen."[3]

In explanation of the above he says that there was no such thing as "Ancient African Chastity" but only "promiscuous sex debauchery", a fact he knows to be true, for the loyal Nelse, brought from Africa when a child, had told him so.[4] Nelse, in approval of what his master says, interrupts with, "'Tell 'em Marse Richard. Tell 'em and let 'em walk humble before the Lawd!'"[5]

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[1] W. E. B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction.

[2] Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword, pp. 18-20.

[3] Ibid., p. 20.

[4] Ibid., p. 21.

[5] Ibid.

In refutation of the "second lie" that "Slavery in the South was a thing of unspeakable cruelty and beastiality,"[1] he describes slavery as a "great school in which millions of Negroes were taught the first principles of civilization."[2] Africa is described as the original breeding place of slavery and cruelty, and the Negro as being better off on a Southern plantation, for "the slave who was lucky enough to live through the ordeal of his trek to the coast and the milder passage of the ship, moved from hell into a paradise when he reached a Southern white man's plantation."[3]

Into the picture drawn of the Negro's activities to breed race hatred is brought The Crisis, described as a "bundle of vile passion and hatred published by a group of Northern Mulattoes and whites."[4] The teachings of the Northern Negro, found in the magazine are shown to lead to further rape of the Southern white woman. Hose, a great black Negro, brute-like and horrible, after reading "The White Witch" by James Weldon Johnson, published in The Crisis, interpreted here as sanctioning Negro-white sex relationships,[5] rapes the sister of the heroine and kills the other two members of the family. The description of the rape, the subsequent man-hunt and slow deliberate mutilation and burning of the Negro, is done in Dixon's best sensational manner.

As indisputable proof of the Negro's low intelligence and his closeness to savagery, life in Harlem is described, The heroine of the book,

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[1] Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword, p. 24.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 154-155.

[5] Ibid., p. 179.

a woman of gentle Southern blood, who plans to devote her life to the study of the race problem, views Harlem's life, sees no single building expressive of the Negro mind.[1] The coming of the Negro to the locality "had simply transformed a section of the city into a huge coocoo's nest with black birds in it."[2] Proof of his savagery is shown to exist in his gay parades on Harlem's streets, in the flashily dressed men and women, in voodoo rituals behind closed doors during which human life is suspected of being sacrificed. The worst thing, however, seen on the streets was the open parade of white women, of the prostitute class of course, with Negro men.[3]

As she walked down its streets she recalled,

> ...the savage traits of these people, that the study of Anthropology had shown and her own experience in the South had confirmed. The precocity of their children, and its collapse at the early onset of puberty, with their failure to grasp subjective ideas. Their overpowering sex impulses. Their herd instincts. These parading crowds, these thronged churches a living sign of it. Their few inhibitions when tempted. Especially their everlasting use of a low type of music. The only contribution the Negro had made to America was the Jazz orchestra and its call to the lower impulses of man. Was Jazz a worth while contribution to music or its degradation to a savage level? Whether worth while or not, it was certainly a direct growth of the African jungle. As their dancing is an expression of sex impulses straight from the tropical forests. As is the low resistance to the poison of syphilis and alcohol, and their easy surrender to the sway of superstition which they call religion. These things all lurk beneath loud clothes. He may wear a Palm Beach suit instead of beads, carry a gold headed cane instead of a poisoned spear, use the white man's telephone instead of his ancient drum, but is his "mind" any the less that of a savage? The mind is the man. As a man thinketh so he is.[4]

Page after page of the book is given over to description of the horrible

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[1] Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword, p. 271.

[2] Ibid., p. 272.

[3] Ibid., p. 275.

[4] Ibid., p. 273.

fate in store for America if the Negro is permitted to rise from the inferior position which he has held since coming to America, a fate being hastened by the acceptance of the Negro by the Communist party which, next to the Negro, is described as the most deteriorating force in modern society. The combination of these two, the Negro and Communism, and its sanction of white-Negro sex relationships is proclaimed as being on the verge of wiping out the three thousand years of white progress and of leaving in its place the rule of the savage.[1]

The individual Negro characters in the book are types supposedly representing those of which the Negro race is composed. They range from the intelligent, therefore dangerous, Negro to the beast-like Negro, quite as dangerous, and on the other hand, to the loyal, obsequious Negro beloved by the South. Intelligence, however, occurs only in the Mulatto. Dr. DuBois, described as being almost white, is, of course, very intelligent, however perverted his beliefs are.

> There was no trace of Negro in him except the light tinge of brown in his skin, and that was not marked. A pointed beard, dark melancholy eyes, a quiet man of culture, French looking rather than American, he gave no impression of an African. He could see a striking resemblance to the features of Gabriele D'Annuncio, turned college professor. It was easy to believe that he had taken degrees at Harvard University and in Germany as well. It was difficult to believe that such a man, with a bare trace of Negro in his make-up, should be so fiercely, passionately, and insistently African as to lead a crusade of violence against the white race.[2]

Other Mulattoes are described as intelligent, the result of the white blood, and flashily dressed, the result of the Negro blood. These are the ones, followers of Dr. DuBois and graduates of Atlanta University, who fight for race equality, the final outcome of which would be race assimila-

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[1] Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword, pp. 466ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 249.

tion and the destruction of the white man's culture. These are shown as disrespectful to the white man in overt action or in thought. Weldon, the Mulatto Colored School superintendent, who was forced to resign, not because of personal dislike of "the boy" but because he was a follower of Dr. DuBois[1] said as the white superintendent approached him, "'Collier, the old white buzzard who roosts in the top of our school board approaches.'"[2]

Other descriptions of Negro characters follow the tradition closely; he is either the loyal Negro or the ugly, unintelligent, flashily dressed Negro. A Harlem Negro, the escort of a white woman, plainly a prostitute, is described as

> ...a little bowlegged black creature, wearing a business suit of incredibly large checks. He had evidently chosen the check to build up his stature. The effect was at once ludicrous and arresting. No eye could pass the suit of clothes without a second glance. And the cloth was chosen for that reason. The shoes were shining patent leather. His tie, a flaming red, its loose broad ends flapping in the wind. On his oblong head sat an immense bowl of a hat, a gray derby. He carried a rattan cane with which he slapped his trousers sharply to attract passing paraders.[3]

The sketchy personal description of the rapist, Hose, follows the traditional Reconstruction conception of the bad Negro: "a black bear-looking figure",[4] "whites of his eyes glowing from the setting of his black skin,"[5] "coarse hands,"[6] "sweating body,"[7] and "bulging thick lips."[8]

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[1] Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword, p. 43.
[2] Ibid., p. 28.
[3] Ibid., p. 75.
[4] Ibid., p. 184.
[5] Ibid., p. 170.
[6] Ibid., p. 171.
[7] Ibid., p. 172.
[8] Ibid.

He beats his victim with a lash and subjects her to "indescribable sex atrocities",[1] playing with her like a cat with a mouse. He is less than human, less than the beasts, but has enough intelligence, or rather cunning, to build a hideaway not easily found by the mob.[2] The average Negro of Harlem is looked on as having similar traits.

The good Negro is pictured in the servant Nelse and the old preacher of the Negro church, who on departing for New York, makes the following farewell speech:

> "I am goin' away from you, my good frien's...to take up de wuk o' soul savin' in de great city er New York. In dis country de Negroes are better treated dan in de Norf. Dey are trusted, give work, advised and hepped forward in every way. Dere's here de good feelin' between us dat's hard to describe. De respectable Negro down here, specially ef he is a minister o' de Gospel, can borrow any fair amount from de bank on his own note. He couldn't borrow a nickel in the Norf on any such paper. When my character was once jump on in dis county, your Chammun of the School Board, Captain Collier, defends me and took hit as a fight on hisself. Goin' Norf today I has my pockets full of blessin's from de best white people in de county. De Norf sees de South too much by its fire eaters, and not enough by de peaceful kin' hearts who are helpin' my people and who are loved of dem. I has never had an unkine word spoke to me in the South by a white man who knowed me. A better day is commin' my people. God bless you!"[3]

But even this good Negro commits a crime, understandable only through a knowledge of "his savage inheritance from the jungles."[4] He kills his daughter, proven not to be his but that of the school teacher who once boarded with them.[5] The daughter was proprietor of a night club which sanctioned unmoral practices and when her father interfered, threatened to kill him. The preacher felt no guilt after committing the crime, for according to the Southern lawyer, the savage's religion has no relation to

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[1] Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword, p. 172.

[2] Ibid., pp. 181-183, 211.

[3] Ibid., p. 156.

[4] Ibid., p. 319.

[5] Ibid., p. 301.

his conduct.[1]

Thus the book builds up its case against the Negro, and the conclusion is reached that the only place for him in the white man's civilization is the same one he occupied before the Civil War.

The remaining books in this group use the Negro as mere local color, even those set during the period of slavery. He is a part of the Southern scene and only as such enters into the fiction. Often when he himself is not present as a character, he enters through remarks made by the white characters such as "'I ain't nothing but a slave. Talk about the nigger being in slavery. I'm worse'n a nigger,"[2] or again through such thoughts as those when a spinster on her fortieth birthday sadly recalled that all her ancestors had had children, even her Uncle Robert, who, though never married, left strapping sons walking the earth, even if they were "niggers;"[3] or through descriptions of such people as "Mrs. Ellington...who all her life held tenaciously to three classifications of human beings, aristocrats, poor whites and niggers."[4] Often when present as a character he is used to give the scene definiteness as in the case of the passing huckster "moving with dignity and melons"[5] down the street singing

> Watermillyuns, South Ca'liny millyuns
> Fresh and fine
> Red to de rin'
> Watermillyuns, watermillyuns,
> Jes' off de vines
> Tender and swe-e-e-t
> Come on and e-a-t.[6]

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[1]Thomas Dixon, The Flaming Sword, p. 319.

[2]Paul Green, "Bread and Butter Come to Supper," Wide Fields (New York, 1928), p. 242.

[3]Paul Green, "Her Birthday," Wide Fields, p. 46.

[4]Paul Green, "Little Bethel People," Wide Fields, p. 261.

[5]Mary Bledsoe, Shadows Slant North (Boston, 1937), p. 99.

[6]Ibid.

In all of these books the place of the Negro is that of the inferior. He is the slave, the field hand or the houseservant, the menial, the tenant, and the boiler. He possesses most of the traits attributed to him by the tradition. However, his role is generally so minor that for the most part, he remains a shadowy part of the background.

The personal descriptions of the Negro character range from numerous short phrases as "black figures shy and grave and light footed still with the jungle,"[1] "strapping black buck-niggers, with gorilla arms and the black paws of panthers,"[2] "wistful Negro,"[3] "a slatternly negress,"[4] "a quiet ungainly creature,"[5] and "an old negro...fringed benevolently by white whiskers,"[6] to descriptions such as "She was a mulatto of twenty-six years, a handsome woman of Amazonian proportions with smooth tawny skin,"[7] and "A mulatto girl and hips a-swing and flat breasts softly moving under the calico, came, stepping smoothly, noiselessly...and passed on, tilting her head to her slow weaving motion."[8]

A few more detailed descriptions occur, such as the following, which follow the traditional pattern closely:

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[1] Struthers Burt, Delectable Mountains, p. 457.

[2] Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel (New York, 1929), p. 512.

[3] Katherine Burt, Beggars All (Boston, 1933), p. 51.

[4] James Boyd, Drums (New York, 1925), p. 94.

[5] Paul Green, "Little Bethel People," Wide Fields, p. 274.

[6] Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 304.

[7] Ibid.

[8] James Boyd, Marching On (New York, 1927), p. 67.

> ...Logan was a regular Guinea nigger with a little peaked head sunk down between enormous shoulders. His hide was thick and so black that had it not been for the gray of his palms and the pinkness of his tongue, you would have thought the scoundrel was black all through....Taking him all in all--his skin, his ape-like build, the inarticulate, thick sounds he made--he was as near an animal as you could get.[1]

That of the yellow Negro, Rav, varies slightly from the traditional:

> The other Negro, Rav, was a light tan, spare and tall. His nose had a bridge to it, his nostrils, though wide-flaring, were thin and flexible, some trace of distinction managed to survive his tattered shirt and high-low trousers of brown slave cloth, and he bore himself with a certain faded elegance which suggested that though now condemned to serve as a field hand, he might formerly have been a house servant.[2]

As does that of Margaret:

> As a bodyguard--for whatever reason she might have been necessary--Margaret possessed due physical equipment. Six-feet-two in height she stood, "cypress black as e'er was crow," a stalwart Amazon of amazing comeliness, under whose arm the Vermonter might walk and not upset the hat with the feather. Nevertheless, he did not...Margaret the Magnificent might not understand.[3]

The good and the loyal Negro appear both in the historical novel and those set more recently. In Marching On, a character says of her faithful old mammy, "'That old negress will raise such a fuss in heaven if I don't get in, that the angels won't be able to hear their own hallelujahs...'"[4] He is seen helping the "white folks" bury the silver before the Yankees come.[5] He acts solely for the welfare of the master as Solomon, in By Reason of Strength, who, after pulling the "lil Marse" from the fire, rode ten miles to tell the "ole Marse." When he arrived

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[1] James Boyd, Marching On, p. 64.

[2] Ibid., p. 65.

[3] William Dudley Pelley, Golden Rubbish (New York, 1929), p. 146.

[4] James Boyd, op. cit., pp. 411-412.

[5] Ibid.

> He raised one hand as if to wipe it perspiration away, staggered, then toppled in a heap. But as he raised his hand Donald saw that which banished his suspicions that Solomon was drunk. He dropped on one knee by the man's side, picked up first one wrist, then the other, and turned the hands palm upward. There were no palms, properly speaking, in Solomon's hands. Both had been terribly blistered and the blisters had been torn to pieces....In dragging the child from the fire and beating out the flames in his clothes Solomon had burned both hands badly, but he had saddled the horse and ridden furiously for ten miles, the reins tearing his blistered hands at every jump.[1]

or he hangs lovingly over his "white folks",

> The kitchen door swung open. Tall gaunt and black Sophansiba strode to Johnny's side; without speaking she took his hand and stroked it between her leathery palms.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> She looked down at Johnny with a deep warm glance. "He can come back necked if he de mind, das what my little misto can."[2]

While seldom appearing personally in the novels with more recent settings, the loyal Negro is mentioned. George Weber in The Web and the Rock hopes that some day he will have "a negro man [servant], thirty-five years old, black, good-humored, loyal and clean."[3]

Other characteristic traits attributed to the Negro by the tradition, found now and then in this group of books, are laziness, expressed in some brief manner as "'Too lazy to hold up the nozzle of his can'";[4] great strength, spoken of in connection with some character as "She performed daily tasks...that would have floored a strong negro".[5] In one or two instances the odor attributed to the race is used to complete a description as in the case of the "slabby yellow girl" who exuded a "sickly, oily,

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[1] Gerald Johnson, By Reason of Strength (New York, [1930]), p. 91.

[2] James Boyd, Drums, p. 385.

[3] Thomas Wolfe, The Web and the Rock (New York, [1937]), p. 292.

[4] James Boyd, Marching On, pp. 135-136.

[5] Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 279.

smell,"[1] or in that of "Niggertown" where "the smell of jungle tropics was stewed in with frying cookery."[2]

The unmorality of Negroes is seldom mentioned except in the novels and short stories of Thomas Wolfe who mentions Negro "bucks" who earned $60 a week as stevedores and spent it on a mulatto girl in a single evening of riot".[3] He also describes a Negro woman who willingly undresses and offers herself as payment for an overdue paper bill.[4]

A character in Long Hunt, referring to his tame otters compares them to Negroes, "'Just like a parcel of niggers, you couldn't get them to do...'" and attributes this to a childish quality.[5] In "The Face of the War" the same characteristic is attributed to a troop of Negro soldiers about to be transferred overseas:

> But now a column of black troops is coming by. They are a portion of a Negro regiment from Texas, powerfully big men, naive and wandering as children, incorrigibly unsuited to the military discipline. Something is wrong, forgotten, out of place, with everyone's equipment: one has lost his cap, another is without a belt, another is shy two buttons on his jacket, still another has mislaid his canteen, one is shy a good part of his knapsack equipment, and dumbly, ignorantly bewildered at his loss--... each one pours out the burden of his complaint....They beg and cajole the lieutenant with the naive and confident faith of a child.[6]

The trait is also bestowed upon "two town darkies" who

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[1] James Boyd, Long Hunt (New York, 1930), p. 28.

[2] Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel, p. 136.

[3] Ibid., p. 512.

[4] Ibid., pp. 305-306.

[5] James Boyd, Long Hunt, p. 66.

[6] Thomas Wolfe, "The Face of the War," From Death to Morning (New York, 1935), pp. 88-90.

> ...had watched the elephant's performance with bulging eyes, would turn to each other with ape-like grins, bend double as they slapped their knees and howled with swart rich nigger-laughter, saying to each other in a kind of rhythmical chorus of question and reply:
>
> "He don't play with it do he?"
>
> "No, suh! he don't send no boy!"
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Har! Har! Har! Har!"--and they choked and screamed with their rich laughter, slapping their thighs with a solid smack as they described to each other the elephant's prowess.[1]

Accompanying this childishness of the Negro is the comic element these writers find in him. Beau Bill, a slave, put in jail for giving a ball without official permission highly amuses his listeners when he informs them what he has told the judge:

> "'Jedge', I say in de cou't dis mo'nin', 'Who own me?' Jedge he 'lows de inco'poration own me. 'Well', I say, 'Jedge, if a man own a nigger and de nigger git in de calaboose, de man try to get him out so he kin go back to work. How kin de inco'poration shet up its own nigger, an' de onliest nigger dat it got?' And den I say 'If you shet me up who tote de gobbage....What dem little pigses gwine to think when dey mamies don' get no gobbage?'... 'Jedge'...'Is you gwine to visit my sins on dem pigs unto de third and fou'th generation?'....Yas, gemmen, when de Jedge see I kin quote de scripture chapter and verse, he tu'n me loose."[2]

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the books which adhere most closely to the conventional idea of the Negro have, within them, an element of the untraditional. The historical novels which have a plantation setting, especially such as Marching On, are found to have this element. As against the loyal Negro of the tradition, indifferent to freedom, are the Negroes on the plantation heard singing of freedom.

> When de Lincoln gunboats come,
> We shall be free!
> . . . . . .
> Lord Jesus, he done hear us pray,
> . . . . . .

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[1] Thomas Wolfe, "Circus at Dawn," From Death to Morning, p. 208.

[2] James Boyd, Marching On, pp. 162-163.

We shall be free!
We shall be free!
We shall be free![1]

The greatest modification of the tradition, however, is found in the works of Paul Green and Thomas Wolfe. While the material, and often the treatment, is the same, these authors, having certain ends in view, give the material both a new meaning and direction. Paul Green, in his effort to present the story of the people he knows as human beings, regardless of color, goes beyond the tradition, however present as backgroumd it is in his works, and paints the various aspects of the life under consideration. Thus it is possible for the s on in Paul Green's play, "The House of Connelly" to speak openly, though in bitterness, of a side of life which the tradition did not recognize. Angered by his mother, Will speaks of the father:

> General William Hampton Connelly--in the vanguard of the brave--yea, a nigger wench in every fence jamb.
> . . . . . .
> ....Sisters and brothers?...You Duffy and Harvy and Jenny? All of you come in! Hist! let's set our flesh and blood at the table--a row of mulattoes.[2]

And thus it is possible in "In Abraham's Bosom" for Abraham McCranie's attempts to educate himself and his people to be confounded by race hatred.[3] In like manner, Arth Loring, in the short story "The Lost Ford," "humble and hard working...a synonym for what the white folks thought Negroes ought to be,"[4] and his wife are shown to have the same emotions and aspirations of any normal human being.[5]

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[1]James Boyd, Marching On, p. 413.

[2]Paul Green, "The House of Connelly," Out of the South (New York, 1939), p. 58.

[3]Paul Green, "In Abraham's Bosom," Out of the South, pp. 207ff.

[4]Paul Green, "Little Bethel People," Wide Fields, p. 271.

[5]Paul Green, "The Lost Ford," Wide Fields, pp. 133ff.

The same realistic method that Thomas Wolfe uses in his treatment of the main interest in his novels is often used in his handling of the Negro element therein. Mixed with the traditional are instances of a treatment which departs from the hackneyed. The descriptions are often tinged with realism, as is the one of South Carolina and its people:

> And after a day before the drug stores or around the empty fountain in the Courthouse Square, they go out and lynch a nigger. They kill him and they kill him hard. They get in cars at night and put the nigger in between them, they jab little knives into the nigger, not a long way, not the whole way in, but just a little way and they laugh to see him squirm. When they get out at the place where they are going to, the place the nigger sat in is a pool of blood....Then they take the nigger through the rough field...and hang him to a tree. But before they hang him they saw off his thick nose....And they laugh about it. Then they castrate him. And at the end they hang him.[1]

and the description of "Niggertown" in The Web and the Rock:

> ...to sweat my way through Niggertown in the dreary torpor of the afternoon...to draw my breath in stench, and sourness, breath in the funky nigger stench, sour washpots and branch-sewage, nigger privies and the sour shambles of the nigger shacks;...little... nigger children...so bowed out with rickets that their little legs look like twin sausages of fat soft rubber...[2]

Of like nature is his powerful description of Dick Prosser, the Sheppertons' new Negro man, gone berserk, and his calm deliberate killing of all who got in his way, both black and white, and his subsequent lynching and the hanging of his body in the "undertaker's place, for every woman, man, and child in town to see."[3]

Though we acknowledge these exceptions found in the works of Paul Green and Thomas Wolfe, the general treatment of the Negro in the books

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[1] Thomas Wolfe, The Web and the Rock, p. 14.

[2] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[3] Ibid., pp. 148-154.

discussed here follows in the tradition, often modified, begun during the preceding century. The general characteristics of the Negro figure and his position are the same, the difference, when there is any, is in degree not kind. Like the tradition, what emphasis there is, is placed on the characteristics of the Negro and not on race relations. Even The Flaming Sword which repeatedly speaks of race relations places the emphasis on the characteristics of the Negro.

To be noted also, the fact that none of the books, with the exception of The Flaming Sword, uses the Negro except as a subsidiary figure. This is equally true of his position in the historical novels set on the plantation. In connection with this, it must be borne in mind that the traditional characteristics here mentioned and illustrated are not those of all or any one person, for no one Negro character enters into the story enough to be treated at any length; but they are the characteristics of the composite Negro character which is found in these books.

CHAPTER III

NEW TRENDS

In a notable part of the body of recent North Carolina fiction the Negro has been the recipient of a new treatment. Still, for the most part, occupying a minor place in the story, he is no longer considered a menace to society, nor the inevitable servant of the Southern scene, but has advanced to a role of considerably more importance.

Of the six books in which the new treatment is apparent, four, Olive Dargan's Call Home the Heart and A Stone Came Rolling, and Grace Lumpkin's To Make My Bread and A Sign for Cain, the only one in which the Negro character figures to any degree, are proletarian novels and the approach to the Negro is in keeping with the trends of the type. In one of the others, James McConnaughey's Village Chronicle, the tragic Mulatto appears; and in James Shields' Just Plain Larnin', the Negro school of the community is briefly depicted.

In three of the proletarian novels (Call Home the Heart, A Stone Came Rolling, and To Make My Bread) the Negro is more of a subject than a character. However, what is said of him is very important, for in the ideas expressed the new emphasis is as apparent as in the Negro characters themselves.

In the four books the Negro is presented as a part of the oppressed working class for whom justice is being sought. In them, as in the community pictured in Call Home the Heart, a "new and unheard of leaven"[1] is

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[1] Olive Tilford Dargan, Call Home the Heart (New York, 1932), p. 315.

at work where the Negro is concerned, and as Derry Unthank says to Ishma,

> "Color a sword no more divideth Man;
> One race inhabits earth; the sons of God."[1]

However, in the case of the white radicals, all except in A Sign for Cain, the necessity for permitting the Negro to join the unions in process of organization, is twofold. The first, and seemingly the more important, reason is summed up in Derry Unthank's remarks to Ishma in Call Home the Heart:

> "Don't you know that if every white worker in the South was to join the union the bosses could still chuckle and pat their paunches? They'd still have a big population of workers in the unorganized blacks."[2]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "....In three years they could be trained to fill every white man's place in a Dixie mill. The only difference would be a little pigment under the skin and that wouldn't hurt the bosses' money."[3]

Bonnie, in To Make My Bread, expresses the same thought:

> "...I can see without looking very far that what Tom Moore says is true. That if we don't work with them the owners can use them against us. Where would we be if they went over to Stumptown and got them in our places? It's plain common sense that we've got to work together."[4]

Ishma, grown into a mature radical in A Stone Came Rolling, re-echoes Derry's words:

> "So long as we leave them [Negroes] out, we leave a weapon for the enemy's hand. Isn't the Negro a worker? We can't go divided into a workers' world. We have to go together."[5]

The last two sentences of this quotation give the second reason why the

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[1] Olive Tilford Dargan, Call Home the Heart, p. 354.

[2] Ibid., p. 352.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Grace Lumpkin, To Make My Bread (New York, 1932), p. 350.

[5] Olive Tilford Dargan, A Stone Came Rolling (New York, 1935), p. 238.

Negro must be accepted as one of them by the white workers. He, too, is a worker. Bonnie, in reference to this, tells her friends that "The colored people work along side of us....And I can't see why they shouldn't fight along side us and we them."[1]

In A Sign for Cain there is no question of the Negro's right to be considered as one of the oppressed men of the earth. All men are brothers and entitled to the same rights and privileges. Denis, the Negro organizer, sees all the underprivileged as his people. "My people are white people, too. They are working people white and colored."[2] Bill, the white "comrade", the editor of the town paper, has no qualms, either, and in his editorials "'suggested that the white tenant farmers and share-croppers have the same interests'" as the Negro farmers, "'and that the two should pool their interests!'"[3] The petty social barriers which Southern society places between the two races are not present. Denis addresses Bill as Bill,[4] and not Mr. Bill, the usual mode of address required by the South regardless of how friendly individuals of the two races become. And utterly at variance with custom, Mrs. Foster, the wife of one of the white "comrades," invites Denis to "'Come in and sit with us when you feel like it.'"[5] Lee Foster accompanies Denis and the Negro tenants to the Colonel, the plantation owner, when they go to demand better food.[6]

With the acceptance of the Negro as a fellow worker, the age old

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[1] Grace Lumpkin, To Make My Bread, p. 350.

[2] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain (New York, [1935]), p. 53.

[3] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[4] Ibid., p. 123.

[5] Ibid., p. 98.

[6] Ibid., pp. 101-102.

problems of white supremacy and intermarriage are raised in the minds of the workers in Call Home the Heart, A Stone Came Rolling and To Make My Bread by the "respectable" members of the communities. In Call Home the Heart, the daily paper condemns the workers for accepting the Negro as an equal. But the author says that the work of the paper was of no avail.

> Never had this [the race issue] failed the forces of disruption. But now no fires could be kindled by shouting "nigger lover", and "Would you want your sister to marry a black man?" Nobody seemed to have a sister in danger of being led to the altar by a person whose color was that of Hannibal, Toussaint L'Overture, Kahma, and the wise Mdombe, of the Balataleles. The fires would not kindle. They sputtered a little here and there, and died to cold ashes.[1]

Although there is never any serious doubt in the mind of the workers as to the question of accepting the Negro, they do discuss it. Ora, in To Make My Bread says,

> "It [the race question] did worry me at first when we spoke of it at secret meetings. But I've come to see that if people let colored folks tend their babies and cook their food, they really don't think their color makes them dirty. A black hand can be as clean as my white one, and they've got souls the same as us."[2]

And Bonnie adds, "They are the same. The color don't seem to make any difference when you see that."[3] Nor does the question of intermarriage worry Bonnie. When asked whether she would be willing to marry a Negro she replies, "I'm not a-talking about marrying. I'm a-talking about working together and fighting together. The marrying can take care of itself."[4]

Ishma, who is yet learning the principles of brotherhood in Call Home the Heart, cannot accept her black comrades as easily as Bonnie, not even

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[1] Olive Tilford Dargan, Call Home the Heart, p. 315.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Grace Lumpkin, To Make My Bread, p. 350.

Butch, though "'he had nice manners and [had] been to school.'"[1] She tells Derry Unthank that "'Mountain people are always white.'"[2] Derry, in complete understanding, tells her of his own struggle against prejudice.

> "Yes, and I'm a mountain man. Do you suppose that I've not had to struggle with the prejudice that was bred in me? My mother was Scotch, indomitable, red haired, and with opinions fixed as...
> . . . . . .
> "Why we had a preacher with a smile like St. Francis and hair like the new fallen snow, who used to tell us that the colored man was not an Adamite, blown into being by the breath of God as we were. He had been created a little earlier, along with the experimental beasts. I was only a little boy with an empty brain waiting to be filled, and that was the holy fustian given me. It wasn't strange that my mind was a torture chamber for years before I could say,
> "Color a sword no more divideth Man;
> One race inhabits earth; the sons of God."[3]

And in answer to her query concerning the mixing of races he continues,

> "Biologically, I suppose you mean. Science hasn't answered that question. We haven't enough data on it. And by the time we could get the data, the harm or good would have been done. I don't try to answer that. But personally, I'd like for racial individualism to continue in the world. When we killed the Indian perhaps we destroyed in them something more valuable to evolution than we possess in ourselves. They wore blankets and we wear overcoats, but they had a sixth sense more sensitive and active than ours. Perhaps all this materialism that we are passing through is a needless detour. And I hope we'll not assimilate the black folk. I'd like to see a black race keeping to its own lines of life, intuitive, rhythmic with nature, building its own shelters for bourgeoning. Why should we think that our method is the only one for returning full handed into the Creative stream? But that's just my personal preference. All I'm sure about, all I'll swear to, all I'll base my sanity on, is that as workers, of whatever race or color, in these southern United States, we must take hands industrially and stand together."[4]

In like manner, all the workers refuse to let the fear of a Mulatto race deter them in their effort to gain better working and living conditions.

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[1] Olive Dargan, Call Home the Heart, p. 352.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 353-4

[4] Olive Tilford Dargan, Call Home the Heart, p. 355.

They realize that the need of the Negro is as acute as their own and that the same system that keeps them virtual slaves keeps the white mill worker and tenant farmer enslaved also.

The Negro's plight is shown to be extremely desperate. Ishma, in A Stone Came Rolling, passing through the Flats, the Negro section of town, notices that there is very little movement on the streets. "Perhaps most of the dwellers were over on Main Street, roaming up and down, hoping for a chance to earn a "coke" or a loaf of bread to take home".[1] Seeing an old Negro woman whom she addresses in the traditional manner as Auntie, Ishma asks her how she is getting along.

> "I kaint say I works...now. Nobody can say dey works anywhere mow."
>
> "But somebody must be working, Auntie?"
>
> "No, we's jest perishin'. That's all. We's jest perishin'. You standin' right heah whah de streets cross. Now you look up an' you look down, you look east an' you look west, an' not a soul dat lives in any house you see has got work. Evah whah you goes there's nothing movin' but yo'sef. It's been six months since Mis' Walker told me she couldn't give me no mo' work. But she lets me come on Sunday and wash up de dishes. Then I gets my dinner, an' a quarter, an' scraps to bring to de ol' man an' my granchile. I ain't had what you could call work in six months--not a tap at a snake. I tell you, honey, our belly-buttons air jest jangin' lose."
>
> She was hungry, one could see. And she was not the kind of negress who looks plump and young at any age. She looked as if her bones had borrowed skin from a much larger person. Her thin hips could be crushed between two hands. The wrinkles of her face lay on one another in little piles.
>
> "Are they cuttin' white folks wages again? Dat's what I've heard."
>
> Ishma hesitated before the old eyes that begged her to say the bitter news was not true.
>
> "Yes."
>
> "What we goin' to do?"[2]

On the Gualt place in A Sign for Cain, the conditions are essentially

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[1] Olive Tilford Dargan, A Stone Came Rolling, pp. 127-28.

[2] Ibid., pp. 128-129.

the same. Regular provisions for the tenants come haphazardly and those that come are hardly edible. Of the cornmeal Rosa says, "'When you open the bag out flies them meal bugs. And the meal is full of lumps. And when you sift it half is already gone because the lumps won't come through.'"[1] Again she says, "'Sometimes we ain't got a thing in the house except collard greens.'"[2]

Excluding the organizers and the union members, the white communities look on the Negro as an inferior. He holds the traditional place accorded him in fiction and in actual life. Denis well realizes this position when, walking through the town, he had an impulse to enter one of the stores to buy a drink in order to quench his thirst.

> ....But he knew it was impossible for him to do this. Though the doors of the hotels and drugstores stood hospitably open he knew he could not enter them unless he was on an errand for a white man, or wished to buy medicine or some other goods. In order to get a drink he must drive four miles or more to Gaulttown, the Negro section of town.[3]

As far as the treatment of the Negro is concerned, the white people are divided into two groups: Those who look on him paternalistically, and those who consider him less than human. These are common to the four books; however, in A Sign for Cain, both are more clearly drawn than in the others. Here, the first group, of which Colonel Gault is an example, resents interference with their contented "nigras". "'They're happy. Leave them alone.'"[4] To Colonel Gault, the Negro is the obedient servant and he the bountiful master who "is his best friend."[5] His actions are

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[1] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, p. 102.

[2] Ibid., p. 94.

[3] Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[4] Ibid., p. 212.

[5] Ibid., p. 213.

governed largely by those of his slave holding parents. Even before making out provision orders for the tenants he thumbs through his father's diary account book, reading now and then an entry such as

> Nov. 1, 1847
> "To Dr. Moore
> Accouchment for negro.....$8
> Visited Douglas Bell in town. Borrowed $500.
> Lovely day."[1]

and

> "Rode to county seat for court. Sold negro $1200.
> Beautiful day.
> Note.....Have cemetery cleaned tomorrow.
> Order Christmas candies for little negroes."[2]

The Colonel then adds to his order "'Candies for little negroes...25 cents worth.'"[3]

To the Colonel the ideal Negro is summed up in Denis the slave, the grandfather of Denis, the organizer. He gives the following description of him:

> "Denis was only a few years older than my father. He could do anything well....He was the finest slave on the place, six feet eight inches tall and had muscles of steel. His voice could be heard for three miles on a still day. Most other plantations used horns with which to wake their slaves. But here a horn was not necessary. We had Denis, Each morning at daybreak, he stood out there beyond the carriage house and called, 'Oh yes. Oh yes. Time to get up.' My father has told me many times how he would wake from a deep sleep in his bed upstairs hearing the voice. Then he would turn over and rest again knowing everything was well because Denis was there.
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> . . . . . .
>
> "Denis would stand here beside this table, while my mother read aloud a chapter from this Bible. After one reading he knew the chapter by heart. When my mother was through he took the Bible with him. That night in the humble church of hand-riven boards which is still standing on the hill beyond this house Denis would read the chapter from memory with the book open before him and taking a text

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[1] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, p. 103.

[2] Ibid., p. 104.

[3] Ibid.

from the same chapter preach a sermon to the listening slaves.

. . . . . .

"Denis stayed with us during the bitter days of reconstruction. It was Denis who taught my baby feet to take their first steps."[1]

This description was given at a little ceremony held by the Colonel when he presented to Maum Nancy, the daughter of old Denis, the Bible Denis had used. Of Nancy, faithful as her father, he says,

"Like your father, you have been faithful to this family, Nancy. You have cared for my children and worked for us without hope of reward. I have seen you many times years ago, after your mistress...left us, with this book on your knees, explaining the pictures to my children. Now these children are grown. They do not need the pictures any longer, and for me the silvery ships are setting their sable sails. This Bible is for you, Nancy, as long as you live."[2]

An example of the other group is sheriff Boyle, the "nigger killer." The following conversation, taking place in the white barber shop, reveals his attitude toward the Negro.

"....Where you been Boyle?"
"Gaulttown."
"Something happened over there, Boyle?" one of the men asked.
"Shot a nigger."

. . . . . .

"That's your twelfth, ain't it Boyle?" Mr. Browdie asked. He said it in the same way in which a man might say to another, "you got two birds out of that covey, didn't you?"
"Yeah, that's my twelfth," Boyle answered.
"Better watch out, Boyle," one of the men warned, "next one's thirteen. Bad luck."
"Sure 'nough," another said.
"Better skip the next one, Boyle," Barlow advised.
"Skip....Hell...." Boyle answered.[3]

All efforts on the Negro's part to better his condition are looked on with disfavor by the "respectable" members of the community. Such "uppity

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[1] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, pp. 25-26.

[2] Ibid., p. 26.

[3] Ibid., p. 72.

niggers" as Denis, Butch Wells, and Stomp Nelson must be taught their place.

In Denis' case, the sheriff "made threats" and "meant it when he said he'd wipe you from the face of the earth"[1] for trying to make "poor white trash" and the "happy contented nigras"[2] conscious of their degraded position. He had to be removed. So when the Colonel's sister is murdered, he is accused of the crime. At the bidding of the sheriff, and for a remuneration the coroner reports rape. Determined to build up a case against Denis, he has a young girl of the neighborhood testify that she saw Denis and Ficents at the scene of the crime and that they, on her approach, "'slunk off under some bushes.'"[3] To the girl's credit, however, she does not wish to testify to such an untruth, for she knows the men to be "good niggers," but the sheriff treats her so kindly and lets her sleep in his daughter's room, although he'd have to have "'the room fumigated after she leaves,'"[4] that she consents.

Each detail of the treatment given the Negroes is minutely and realistically described. Their faces are beaten to pulps by the sheriff and his men, all shown to be degraded and despicable.[5] In contrast to his persecutors, Denis is described as dignified and manly.[6] After innumerable beatings, he cries out, "'I've got no rights as a citizen. Then I stand on my rights as a man.'"[7]

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[1] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, p. 212.
[2] Ibid., p. 211.
[3] Ibid., p. 256.
[4] Ibid., p. 257.
[5] Ibid., p. 268.
[6] Ibid., p. 273.
[7] Ibid.

Not being able to get Denis to confess to something he has not done, the sheriff turns to Ficents and promises to let him go home soon if he signs a confession saying that Denis is guilty.[1] When he refuses, he is beaten again and again, the blows sounding "almost cheerful like the sound of a tap dancer."[2] Once the sheriff stops and asks Ficents if he is ready to sign his name "'so we can let you go home and get some rest.'"[3] When he refuses, "the tatoo beat once more, only louder, quicker, more cheerful."[4] Beaten until half-crazed, Ficents finally signs the confession which the sheriff has written. It reads:

> "He [Denis Gault] told me to stay behind the plum bushes and watch if anybody came down the road. When the automobile came through the bridge, he stepped into the middle of the road and waved it down. She [Mrs. Evelyn Gardner] slowed down and asked him 'What is wrong, Denis?' I was in the plum thicket by the side of the road. He dragged her from her car and got her off into the fields. Then he assaulted her. When he finished he held her down and said to her, 'You goin go tell anybody?' She said, yes she was going to tell. He was still holding her down, one hand over her mouth, except when she spoke. I saw him lean over and pick up something. His hand came up with a rock in it. He hit her twice. He got up and called me. Then he said to me, 'If you tell I'll bust your brains out like I did hers'. Sworn to by me this..."[5]

When the white citizens hear that the confession has been signed, they march to the jail "the great noise of their feet

> scratching on the pavement, as if a giant snake was slithering along with its scales scratching the concrete. There would be a silence and then a dreary shout would come. It was dreary yet menacing like the howl of a wolf."[6]

The white "comrades" prevant the mob from taking the two men from the jail.

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[1] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, pp. 269ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 276.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid, p. 268.

[6] Ibid., p. 279.

Fearful that something like this would happen, they kept watch on the jail, and as soon as they realized the mob's intention, found the Judge and forced him to come, reluctant though he was, and disperse the mob.[1] Ficents and Denis are killed later, however. Jim Gault, the dead woman's nephew and the Colonel's son, the real murderer, afraid the Northern lawyers of the union would disclose his guilt, and wishing to seem a hero in the eyes of his friends who urged him on by saying,"'If I was Jim Gault I'd go up and shoot them myself',"[2] goes to the jail and shoots the two prisoners.[3]

The "Comrades" are helpless before the turn of events. The spirit of the organization lives on however; the men are not deserted even in death by their comrades, black or white. They all resolve to march behind the bodies, through the streets of town and "follow them to their graves."[4] "'We are going to march behind them without turning, straignt on... amd all hell can't stop us'."[5]

In ironic anti-climax, the Judge remarks, "'Why Jim is a hero...He can run for the legislature next year and be elected.'"[6]

Like incidents[7] occur in Call Home the Heart and A Stone Came Rolling, the only difference being that the men escape hanging. In Call Home the Heart, the men of the community decide to teach the "niggers" who are getting "too uppity" and the "nigger organizer" Butch Wells his place. They

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[1] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, p. 278.

[2] Ibid., p. 341.

[3] Ibid., p. 369.

[4] Ibid., p. 373.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 375.

[7] In To Make My Bread it is the white organizer who gets killed. See To Make My Bread, p. 355,ff.

They are spurred on by reports of Negroes being "dealt with" in adjoining counties.

> One was in an adjoining county, where an old negro woman of sixty-five had been hanged in her own house by three or four "neighboring citizens" who thought she had been a bad influence. Another negro had been hanged not ten miles from Winbury, after an altercation with a farmer from whom he demanded money due him for labor. Both had been kept out of the papers, but the "niggers" had got their lesson.[1]

In A Stone Came Rolling, the "City Fathers" decide that Stomp Nelson is too dangerous a "nigger" to have around.[2] They arrest him. Hearing that a mob intends to hang him, they make plans to move him to the Greensboro jail. However, the sheriff makes certain that the mob knows which road he will use.[3]

Both the men are saved by their "comrades." Ishma, maturing under the tutelage of Derry, having no one to help her, the trustworthy comrades being out of town for the night, and the police being no source of aid,

> The police never hurried on striker's business, and as for the lynching, more than one officer of the law has been heard to say that two or three fine little lynchings would save the department a lot of trouble.[4]

goes alone to save Butch Wells. By threatening to kill herself, she secures his release, not before he had been beaten to unconsciousness, however.[5] A ruse is used to secure Stomp Nelson's release. Masked, the comrades stop the sheriff's car when he is taking the prisoner to Greensboro, and he, thinking they are the mob, readily hands the prisoner over to them.[6]

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[1]Olive Tilford Dargan, Call Home the Heart, p. 375.

[2]Olive Tilford Dargan, A Stone Came Rolling, p. 291.

[3]Ibid., p. 292ff.

[4]Olive Tilford Dargan, Call Home the Heart, p. 376.

[5]Ibid., p. 378.

[6]Olive Tilford Dargan, A Stone Came Rolling, pp. 271-294.

Most of the Negro characters themselves are as far removed from the traditional as is the treatment of his relation to the workers and the "respectable" people. Those few who do possess the characteristics of the stereotype Negro do so because they have been portrayed in a realistic rather than in the traditional manner. Among these are Maum Nancy and Brother Shadrack Morton in A Sign for Cain; Gaffie, in Call Home the Heart; and Liddy in A Stone Came Rolling.

Maum Nancy, Denis' mother, is the counterpart of the traditionally loyal servant. She has spent all her life working and caring for her beloved master, the Colonel. When she is sick, her every thought is to get well so that she may look after his wants.[1] When she hears of Denis' plans she tells him that "'the only way you can help yourself is to get white folks to help you...you got to depend on white folks.'"[2] Even when Denis is in jail, she refuses to do anything without the sanction of the Colonel. She refuses to give her consent to have the Northern lawyers defend him because "'I got to have the Colonel's word. I can't do nothing.'"[3] "'I got to know what the Colonel says. I'll do whatever he says.'"[4]

Brother Shadrack Morton, the "white folks nigger," reports all the happenings in the Negro section to the white people. The sheriff knew about the meeting which the Negroes held to discuss employment problems because "'the nigger preacher came to us about that. He said he didn't know beforehand what the meeting was to be about. He's a good nigger and was afraid we would blame him.'"[5] Brother Morton rebukes the Negro for

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[1] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, p. 111.

[2] Ibid., p. 52.

[3] Ibid., p. 312

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 203.

complaining about the treatment he receives from the white man:

> "Some think,,,they don't get enough pay from the white people. They think it's the fault of the white people. But I tell them that isn't the way to think. Heed the words of the Lord, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself and all these things shall be remitted unto you.'"[1]

He explains to Denis that the Negro must say to the white people:

> "...we don't want to hurt you. We wish only for your sympathy. We admire you. We wish to be like you. Let us meet on that bridge of love..."[2]

Afraid to do anything that might offend the "white folks" he preaches a sermon against Denis and Ficents when they are in jail. "'They went around...talking about strange things and now their punishment is come upon them.'"[3] The people, however, act in a most untraditional manner; "a deep groan came from the people. It was not a groan of pain. It was one of anger and protest....It was not until he left the pulpit and sat down...that the groaning stopped."[4] And then, after the choir sang a hymn the people

> very quietly, without the blessing of the preacher,...went out of the church, leaving him sitting alone except for the choir which was behind him and a few of the members who remained on the benches in the body of the church.[5]

Then there is Gaffie, Black Gaffie as she is called, the wife of Butch Wells. She

> was very fat and very black. Her lips were heavy and her teeth so large that one needed the sure avouch of her eyes to believe in them. It was impossible to associate her with woe, though tears were racing down her cheeks. As her fat body moved she shook off an odor that an unwashed collie would have disowned.[6]

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[1] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, p. 55.

[2] Ibid., p. 56.

[3] Ibid., p. 295.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Olive Tilford Dargan, Call Home the Heart, p. 383.

The last of the characters somewhat like the stereotype Negro is Liddy, the Emberson's cook, who "was privileged to open her mouth when she wished."[1] Like the traditional mammy, she fondles the Emberson's youngest. "'Sho' I'll take the po' lamb whah she can cry all she wants on Ol' Liddy's bosom.'"[2]

For the most part the characters stand in contrast with the traditional conception of the Negro. All the important ones possess characteristics not often found heretofore in the Negro of Southern fiction. There is Ed, a manly, hard worker[3] who is bitter toward the white because of what they did to his father:

> "I'll never forget. I can't forget. They hung him up and jabbed the end of a sapling in his mouth. There was some green leaves on the pole heavy with blood. I saw him after...they.... My ma took me up there in the woods....I can't ever forget"...[4]

He cannot make his "'peace...with them white people like she [Nancy] wants.'"[5] Ficents, unlike either Ed or Denis, is indifferent toward life; he "probably said to himself 'I've never had anything. I never will. So I will just work as little as possible and enjoy the sun and the richness of the earth. If I don't care, nothing can hurt me.'"[6] However, when told by Denis that he and every other worker must fight for their rights, he says, "'I got some fight in me yet.'"[7] When describing Ficents' mother, Rosa Williams, "a small woman with a pleasant face"[8] the author makes a definite break with

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[1] Olive Tilford Dargan, A Stone Came Rolling, p. 38.
[2] Ibid., p. 33.
[3] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, p. 53ff.
[4] Ibid., p. 54.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., p. 97.
[7] Ibid., p. 110.
[8] Ibid., p. 89.

the tradition. She speaks of her as "Mrs. Williams,"[1] and thereby nearly establishes a precedent in Southern fiction.

But the most untraditional of the untraditional characters, and by far the most interesting, is Denis. Unlike the stereotype descriptions, little is said of his physical appearance. Rather, his mind, his thoughts, and his aspirations are emphasized. The author speaks of him in the following manner:

> He looked beyond these into the future and saw a world in which people lived together bountifully because the earth was bountiful, and generously because the earth was generous, and unsuspiciously because the reasons for greed and hatred would be removed.[2]

In further description of him, she continues,

> For years he had lived with all his capacities for dreaming, for creating, bound up tightly in himself--almost dead. The knowledge that it was possible to make a new world, and hope he gained from this knowledge, made it possible for these capacities to be loosened and this release had become a joyful thing to him. He had an excellent memory and remembered almost word for word a passage in one of his books which had made a great impression on him. "If man were completely deprived of the ability to dream, if he could never run ahead and mentally conceive in an entire and completed picture the results of the work he is only just commencing, then I can not imagine what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete extensive and fatiguing work in the sphere of art, science and practical work....Divergence between dreams and reality causes no harm if only the person dreaming believes seriously in his dream, if he attentively observes life, compares his observations with the castles he builds and if generally speaking he works conscientiously for the achievement of his dreams. If there is a connection between dreams and life then all is well."
> Denis had been thinking in such a concentrated fashion...[3]

Denis does not go into his work without knowing the price he might have to pay, the price he eventually does pay. "He was conscious of his danger."[4]

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[1] Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, p. 90.
[2] Ibid., p. 97.
[3] Ibid., pp. 97-98.
[4] Ibid., p. 269.

Possessed of all the qualities of virile manhood, he is humble only before his work. He tells the Colonel who reminds him that "'death may be just around the corner for you'" if he persists in his "'foolishness'"[1] that "'Once I heard a colored man, he was a Communist, speak in a court room, Colonel. He said "you may put away or kill me but a hundred like me will rise to carry on my work."'"[2]

The Negro character in the proletarian novels is far removed from the traditional both in personal description and in his relation to the white race. He is no longer looked on as an inferior, but as a human deserving of all the privileges of the human race; and, being deprived of them, it is his unalienable right to join with the other oppressed of the world in order to demand justice.

The authors of the books are realistic in their description of the Negro's position in the Southern community; there is no attempt to justify the unfair treatment received by the Negro; rather, it is deliberately disclosed. The lengths to which the community will go to preserve an outgrown and outmoded social system which precludes any advancement on the part of all the workers, white and black, and which allows justice to be blindfolded by men who use all manner of machinations to gain their desired ends are described minutely. And it is implied, at least, that the community's decadent society grows more diseased in proportion to its efforts to prevent any progress on the part of the proletariat.

In James McConnaughey's Village Chronicle, the tragic Mulatto, not unknown to Southern fiction, appears briefly. Unlike the usual presentation,

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[1]Grace Lumpkin, A Sign for Cain, p. 211.

[2]Ibid., p. 212.

the Mulatto here is a man, and the tragedy has nothing to do with sex.

The story of Lyman Caine, an octoroon, does not differ materially from the usual presentation of the Mulatto; it is the old story modernized and told in variation. His tragedy is that of being white enough to look like, and to wish to be, considered as a white person, and not being able to be one because the possession of one or two drops of Negro blood class him as an inferior. Successful in his attempt to "pass," at first, the inevitable denouement occurs and his Negro ancestry is disclosed.

Caine is presented as a very pathetic figure. Attempting to "pass" for white at the State University at Churchill, a small Southern town, he is extremely nervous when around the teachers or any of his fellow students.[1] He is unsure of himself and afraid that, as white as he is, some tell-tale feature will denounce him as a Negro. He arouses public indignation when his story "Color is Passion," relating the affair of a white woman with a Negro man, is published in the student magazine, a supplement to the village weekly.[2] Caine, a brilliant student in English, makes the story more than ordinarily vivid. When told by his English professor that he has been unwise to publish such a story not because of "'the moral issue involved'"[3] but because "'the color conflict is dangerous even in this enlightened university,'"[4] Caine defends his story by saying in an uneasy tone, "'Well, a negro is a man.'"[5] At the faculty meeting called to decide how to reprimand Caine for such a salacious creation for

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[1] James McConnaughey, Village Chronicle (New York, [1936]), p. 59.
[2] Ibid., pp. 104,ff.
[3] Ibid., p. 143.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.

"'this sort of thing published in the South is not likely to bring... credit to the student body or faculty which would allow such publications,'"[1] the school doctor discloses that Caine has admitted his Negroid ancestry after being told that he had sickle-cell anemia, a disease supposedly found only in those of Negro blood.[2] Automatically, Caine is dropped from the college. Unable to stand ignominy of his position, he commits suicide.[3]

It is not the story itself, which is a departure from the tradition, but the reaction Joel Adams, the English professor, makes to the village's treatment of Caine. To the white people, Caine, after he is found to be a Negro, is just another "nigger," and soon forgotten.[4] But Joel Adams, incesed at the "cruel barbaric" vengeance which made no deviation whatsoever for humanitarian considerations,"[5] does not let the incident die so easily. He could see no reason why the student accepted so long by the white community should be suddenly ostracized because he happened to have a little Negro blood in his veins. In the first of a series of editorials condemning the University and denouncing the community for its unchristian action, he writes,

> "Sometime in the first half of the eighteenth century, a negress named Marie Dumas had a child by Antoine Alexandre Davy, a white man. The child, a boy, was, when he attained manhood, known as General Dumas. General Dumas' son was Alexandre Dumas, pere, a quatroon. Alexandre Dumas, fils, was an octoroon.
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> "Around the middle of the nineteenth century, in another country and under somewhat different social conditions, a negro named Caine married by common law a white woman.[6] They settled in Alabama. Their son, a mulatto, married a white woman. The

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[1] James McConnaughey, Village Chronicle, p. 185.

[2] Ibid., pp. 196, 182.

[3] Ibid., p. 202.

[4] Ibid., pp. 242,ff.

[5] Ibid., p. 199.

[6] This is unlike the usual situation. It is generally the woman who is of Negroid blood.

> issue of this union, a quatroon, also married a white woman, and their son, an octoroon, came to this university in September. A few days ago it was discovered that the boy was not white, that there was one part in eight of colored blood in his veins. In the eyes of the state and the university, that one eighth colored blood made the boy unfit--by what standards God only knows--to avail himself of the privileges of this university. The boy, an only child, showed decided promise as a writer. Whether or not he would have been another Dumas, no one will ever know. When informed that he could no longer attend the university, he killed himself.
>
> "It is to be regretted that Lyman Caine did not choose one of the second-rate, more humble universities, such as Yale or Harvard. They are not too proud at Yale and Harvard to accept negroes. It is too bad Caine aimed so high, that he tried to get his education in this God-like institution where one can be moronic, but above all else, he must be all white.
>
> "Nothing can be done about Caine's death now, of course. In the largest sense, the incident is closed. This being the case, I trust those staunch souls who raised their voices in savage indignation over this one eighth insult to the university's honor, have slept well since the night Caine died. I hope their consciences are not futilely troubled, for Lyman Caine is dead now, and the university's honor has been restored to its former pristine state."[1]

He continues his attacks and passes to the treatment of the whole Negro race.

> "....The South's prejudices have been accepted far too long by Southerners as sacred, untouchable, and inviolate rights.... After that disgusting exhibition at the faculty meeting and Caine's suicide, it seems to me high time somebody dragged them all out into the open for once. Why this persecution of the negro? Why the lynchings? Why this sharp color line in the South and nowhere else? Oh, I know all the stock answers: the negro swinging from a limb being the only effective deterrent for crimes such as rape; the immediate visual example, and all that..."[2]

The reaction of the community to these attacks was mainly that of Doctor Hendrickson who said that Joel Adams should be ridden "'out of town on a rail, that's what. Suggesting that we take negroes into the university, give them the same rights as white people! Why, it's--it's unbelievable!'"[3] But even the professor forgets the injustices of the Mulatto in

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[1] James McConnaughey, Village Chronicle, pp. 267-268.

[2] Ibid., p. 267.

[3] Ibid., p. 265.

his intense interest in his own.

James Shields' Just Plain Larnin', a story of the school system of a small Southern town, briefly touches on the Negro school and the attitude of the officials toward them. The Negro, handicapped by limited facilities which become even more limited as their budget has to be cut in order to increase that of the white, is shown to be eager and alive "to the need for education" and taking advantage of every opportunity.[1]

To the school board the Negro school is one of the burdens it must accept. Only after the needs of the white schools are satisfied is the Negro school to be even thought of. When the chairman of the board is told that the expenditures of the white schools exceeded the budget, he says, "'Well, take it off the niggers' budget.'"[2] The superintendent protests against such because

> "the budget for colored schools has already been reduced far below last year's actual expenditure, and we have enrolled two hundred more negro children than we had at this time last year."[3]

This makes not the slightest difference to the chairman. He "smiled tolerantly" at the superintendent.

> "I know, Potts. You people have a soft spot for the niggers, and I'm not denying I feel that way myself. But you've been in this business long enough to know that it's whites you've got to satisfy, and the only way to satisfy them is to spend a reasonable amount of money in supplies and equipment. Why, I'll bet your attendance will show a larger percentage of regular school attendance among the niggers than the whites. Those little niggers have ambition...and they are mighty easy spoiled. Spend a little too much on 'em and they forget their place. You take my advice, cut down on their budget and add to the whites' what you have to if you expect the Board to pass it."[4]

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[1] James Shields, Just Plain Larnin' (New York, 1934), p. 207.

[2] Ibid., p. 51.

[3] Ibid., p. 51.

[4] Ibid., pp. 51-52.

The Negro schools are described as inadequate for the huge enrollment: there are only four buildings to accommodate the four thousand regular attendants. But, as the superintendent, made aware of his ignorance of Negro education by the Northern educator, observes when he makes his first visit to them, the children and teachers are not deterred by lack of facilities. At one school

> as they went from room to room, accompanied by Professor Dreyfuss, the principal, a quiet dignified and bespectacled negro of fifty-odd, Stafford was amazed at the extreme quiet of the murky-overcrowded rooms. One room in particular--the principal said it was a third grade--was crowded with sixty-eight children...[1]

At the high school, the "most business like place he [superintendent] had ever seen"[2] he saw "room after room of intent, studious young men and women."[3]

The reaction which the superintendent has is in contradiction to every tenet of the tradition. The inspection

> was a revelation....He had never taken time to think about the negro except as a convenient servant or workman to do his bidding. Here was a different picture, that of a race alive to its need for education, a host of quiet, determined young people uncomplainingly making the most of the deficient facilities allotted them. And the leaders, the principals and teachers! Doctor Kalb the Northern educator had once remarked--facetiously it had seemed to Stafford at the time--that the most efficient administration and the more scholarly minds of the system were to be found in the negro schools. Deep as was Stafford's own prejudice, he harked back to that statement again and again after this first inspection and with growing credulity.[4]

There are also, a few minor instances of the traditional attitude mixed in with the new. The small Negro children are referred to as "pickaninnies,"[5]

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[1] James Shields, Just Plain Larnin', pp. 206-207.

[2] Ibid., p. 207.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 207-208.

[5] Ibid., p. 207.

and a janitor of a school is described as "the lazy nigger... asleep in the boiler room."[1]

However, like the proletarian novels and Village Chronicle, James Shields' Just Plain Larnin' shows none of the bland acceptance of the traditional attitude toward the Negro. Rather, it shows a growing trend toward a more liberal and realistic presentation of the Negro and his relations with the white man.

In all six novels discussed in this chapter, new trends in the treatment of the Negro are apparent. Few of the characters are patterned after the stereotype Negro figure; and those which are seem to be only a realistic representation of types which do exist within the race. There is no attempt to mask or justify the South's treatment of the Negro in general, or the place accorded him. Rather, the same realistic and critical attitude which is seen in their approach made to other Southern problems, is observable in their treatment of the Negro.

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[1]James Shields, Just Plain Larnin', p. 73.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

North Carolina, until recently barren in literary achievement, has with one exception, done little to perpetuate the Southern literary tradition. Her burgeoning taking place only after the Cultural Renaissance had begun, her use of the tradition has been modified and incidental, and in some cases when affected by the new realism and liberalism the tradition has become negligible.

In the twenty-five works referred to in this study, excluding the plays of Paul Green, the Negro both as character and reference has been, with two major exceptions, the recipient of a very incidental treatment. Whatever the approach, traditional or untraditional, he has remained an indefinite part of the background.

These works, falling naturally into two groups as regards the treatment of the Negro, present him either as a modified conventional character, more in degree than in kind from the stereotype; or in the light of a new liberal attitude which takes cognizance of individual characteristics, such as the following: recognizes his ability, his serious attempt at education, the tragic position of the Mulatto; and often identifies the Negro with the total downtrodden mass in American society.

In nineteen of the works, the incidental treatment of the Negro follows in general outline, the conventional approach. Expressing tacitly the belief in white supremacy, the books show no Negro character outside the confines of the tradition adhered to in Southern literature. He is the ever present servant or slave, according to the setting, the inferior

being, inevitably a part of the Southern scene. He is used only to such degree as will give definiteness to that scene through occasional reference to a passing figure or the servant busy somewhere in the rear of the house. He is, mainly through some general remark made by the white character, or interpolated aside by the author, and infrequently through a full description or presentation of the Negro himself, endowed always with the characteristics of the stereotype Negro figure, such as loyalty, childishness, comicalness, laziness, ignorance, and unmorality. The occasional reference made to his physical features coincides generally with those of the conventional type.

Two of the authors, Paul Green and Thomas Wolfe, to some extent, go beyond the traditional treatment of the Negro and stand as a link between the old and the new. Using much the same material as the other writers, in their incidental treatment, they present a more varied and less conventional picture.

The one exception to the modified use of the tradition is found in The Flaming Sword, by Thomas Dixon, who is North Carolina's one contribution to the perpetuation of the tradition as developed in the Reconstruction novel. The Flaming Sword, the vestigial remains of a past era in which fiction presenting the Negro as a menace to white womanhood, depicts the loyal Negro, with all the attending characteristics, as the only one acceptable in a white society, and the New-socially-conscious-Negro with all his activities, educational and political, as a menace to western civilization.

In the remaining six books, a change in attitude is evident. Critical of the illiberal South and many of its traditional attitudes, the books make a new approach to the Negro. In the four proletarian novels he is

accepted as one of the downtrodden mass for whom social justice is being sought. His position in the white community is well realized and no attempt is made to mask the oppressed conditions under which he struggles.

The individual character, when depicted, with the few exceptions patterned after the older literary type and presented more in the interest of realism than as an acceptance of traditional attitudes, are recognized as people, each having a distinct individuality. Recognized also is his desire for education, his realization of his own oppressed condition as well as that of all other underprivileged groups, and his willingness and capability to help build a better social system.

The remaining two books belonging to this group, even in their very minor treatment of the Negro, also show a growing liberality in the presentation of the Negro's problems, in one book it is the Mulatto's, and a willingness to admit his possession of intelligence.

Although it is evident that the traditional attitude toward the Negro is present in the fiction of North Carolina, it is also evident that a new liberalism, born of the critical spirit ushered in with the Cultural Renaissance, now alive in the South and especially in North Carolina, has affected the Negro in at least a portion of the recent fiction of the State. Disregarding Thomas Dixon's novel which belongs in reality to the period of his earlier works, The Leopard's Spots and The Clansman, and not to the present in its attitude, the fiction of North Carolina gives promise at least, even in its incidental treatment, of a liberal attitude toward the Negro which might, in the future, unless "there is a resurgence of the old reactionary spirit,"[1] approach the liberalism found in her non-fictional works.

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[1] Edwin Mims, The Advancing South, p. 9.

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